

## Chapter 1 The Ritual

The warm air of a summer night was as still as a corpse. Not a leaf rustled in its branch, no animals roamed around. It was as if it had an acute understanding of the events that would soon come to pass and was doing all it could to let its importance be known.

An imposing manor stood magnificently atop a hill; the light of the full moon in which it was bathing in, gave it an all too sinister air. The garden, wherein by day held numerous flowers of all colours, currently looked like a sea of black masses. Light could be seen coming from a window in the upper floors of the manor.

Within this floor, a black hooded witch was slowly making her way down a dimly lit corridor. The portraits hanging on the wall were sleeping soundly in their frames. The witch reached a door at the end of the corridor, the flickering light of candles seeping out from the gaps underneath it. Knocking gently on the door, she heard a soft voice calling for her to enter.

Taking the cool metal handle, she pushed the door to a beautifully furnished bedroom. The soft coloured walls seemed to take a darker shade by the faint orange light emitted by the numerous candles that were placed in the room. Dark blue curtains with skilfully sewn gold trimmings hung over the windows. A large four poster bed with silver hangings stood in the middle of the room. To one side were a beautifully crafted desk with intricate carvings on its legs and a large wardrobe.

"My Lady, the hour is upon us," said the hooded witch in barely a whisper.

Someone shifted within a corner of the room that the candles' light could not reach. A woman with willowy grace slowly stepped out of the shadows and faced the young witch. She wore a simple dark robe that managed to look elegant on her and had a black veil covering her face, hiding her gentle features.

"Yes, Selene, my dear. The time approaches," the woman replied in a soft voice.

The witch called Selene took out a vial of potion from her robe and gave it to the veiled woman. The woman frowned at the sight of the potion but Selene pressed it onto her hand.

"I'll never get use to that taste," the woman said in disgust, returning the vial to Selene.

Selene gave her a knowing smile before walking towards the desk drawers and pulling out a jet black candle. As she did this, the woman watched her every action critically, making sure she didn't make a mistake. Ancient Rituals such as this were complicated and take long to prepare. She would make sure nothing was to go wrong.

Having placed the black candle in the centre of a triangle that was drawn on the floor, the young witch took out a small pouch from her pocket and muttered a few words before tossing a handful of white powder to the room. The moment the powder left her hand, all the other candles in the room flickered out leaving them in the glow of a single candlelight.

The girl, her job done for now, dutifully stepped away from the triangle as the woman in dark robes made to move towards one of the three points in the diagram on the floor.

In a deep, strong voice she spoke,

Tonight as the moon reaches its peak

On the hour light touches dark

Remove all that had been cast

With blood from the mother

The woman took a silver dagger from within her robes and cut her hand, allowing the blood to drip into the flames.

Give back all that she had lost

Movements from across the room caught her attention. Squinting in the darkness, she caught sight of a person dressed similarly in dark robes move closer to her. Her lips twitched slightly into a smile when she recognised the new person in the room.

The black clad wizard continued her line of chanting once he too was within the diagram, directly opposite her. Pulling out an identical silver dagger he spoke loudly and clearly.

Blood of the father

In his veins flow

Return all that had been taken!

More blood dripped into the now growing flames as the wizard added his blood to the mix. In one voice the two of them completed the ritual.

With blood of the mother

Protection he was given

With blood of the father

Identity he has

And now the hour has come

Bring back to us!

Give back to us!

Return to us!

Child of the Dark we call on you,

Your hour has come,

**COME BACK TO US!**

The last line was uttered with such a force that it reverberated through out the room. As soon as the last words were said, the sole candle burst into flames leaving the occupants of the room temporarily blinded.

Once the shock of the light's intensity faded, the two witches and the wizard opened their eyes to find the other candles in the room lit once more. However the large black candle they had used for the ritual was all in ashes, etching a dark mark on the floor. A black and silver hilted sword embedded on top of a milky white skull was formed within the triangle from the ashes of the candle, a blood red snake coiled around its blade with the head resting on the hilt and the tail just visible in the mouth of the skull.

The woman swayed on the spot, the ritual having robbed her of her energy. In a swish of his black cloak, the man caught the woman in his arms and set her down on one of the chairs.

"Selene, get a glass of water!" the man ordered.

Selene, who had been watching transfixed during the entire ceremony, went to the connecting bathroom and filled a glass with water.

The man took the glass of water from her and slowly handed it to the woman. Selene remained beside her, making sure the ritual had done nothing more than tire her.

"Did you take your potion?" the man asked.

"Yes." the woman replied once she had set the glass on the desk. She stared at the man longingly and smiled. "You came."

"Of course." the man replied rising to his feet to face her.

The woman took hold of the veil covering her face and flipped it over her head; long red hair fell down and framed her face. With the veil gone, her beautiful features could now be seen. From her soft, full lips to her sparkling green eyes.

She smiled fondly at the man before her. "My Dark Prince."

The man smiled at the familiar title and bend down to take her soft hand in his. "My love," he said, kissing her hand tenderly.

"Soon he shall know," he assured her.

"Let us hope so. Too long we have waited. Too long have we played the part of ignorant fools and blindly followed others. I want him back my prince," she said staring straight at the man's dark eyes.

"So do I, my love. So do I," he mumbled. "And now we wait."

"And now we wait," she repeated, nodding her head and looking at the distance.

Light could now be seen rising from the horizon. Soon all will be put back in its place and all those who had wronged them would pay.

The Dark Prince, the Dark Lady, the Dark Child, the Dark Maiden and the Dark Lord would soon be reunited.

A/N: The next chapter will be up in a few week. Til' then, please read and review...

dan4eva

## Chapter 2 The Change

On the same mysterious night, as the remnants of magic from the ancient ritual clung in the air, a young wizard was waiting quietly in his dark desolate room. Patiently waiting like every year since his eleventh birthday for the inevitable moment when his clock would turn 12, signalling the end of yet another gruelling year and the beginning of a new age. At present, the clock on his bedside table read 11:55, five more minutes until Harry Potter officially turned sixteen.

Right now he was sitting quietly on his lumpy cot, silently contemplating the events of the past months. So much had happened to him in the course of a few years, when he first set foot on the wizarding world. It seemed like ages ago when he was just an 11 year old boy having received his first Hogwarts letter. How had his first trip to Diagon Alley and seeing magic for the first time enthralled him! And the exhilarating thrill of having rescued his godfather at the age of thirteen from the clutches of the Ministry... All seemed to go so well back then.

But now his childlike innocence of viewing the world as one gigantic playground was gone. He had witnessed first hand that people die in this playground and the consequences of his rash actions do not always turn out the way he wants them to.

He was sitting as still as could be, twirling his wand precisely in his fingers, his brows furrowed in deep thought and his eyes glinting madly in the dark was a testament to how messed up his thoughts really were. No matter in which angle he studied the events in the Department Of Mysteries, he could not deny the fact that he had performed an Unforgivable. Even after being told that casting such a curse would earn him a cell in Azkaban, he had still willingly cast it on another witch.

Yet despite how hard he chastised himself over and over for casting the Dark Arts, he could not help but feel a new found pleasure; he had enjoyed every moment of it. It was as if he were a little boy who had just had his eyes opened to a brand new toy. His lips twitched to an unmistakable grin at the thought; he knew he wanted more of that toy.

The clock now read 11:59, his wand dropped on the floor in a loud clatter as flaming burst of pain erupted in his body. His bones felt like they were being twisted and turned in different directions, his back arching in a dangerous angle. Sickening pops were heard as his bones realigned themselves to their joints.

And as quickly as the pain had come, the spasms ceased. Harry collapsed on the floor, spitting blood that had come when he bit his tongue to prevent himself from screaming out in pain, oblivious to the grey mist that had seeped into his body. His clothes were a tangled mess and the perspiration he had worked up during the ordeal made them stick to his skin. In a couple of struggling moves, he pushed himself off the floor and fell on his bed, gasping for air.

Heart still racing as if he had just ran a 100m sprint, Harry reached up to touch his scar. It was cool to the touch compared to the rest of his body that was still feverish. For a second he was pleased that the acute pain hadn't come from his connection to the Dark Lord. But then his new problem arose. If the Dark Lord wasn't the cause of his pain, what was?

Several sharp tapings were heard coming from his window. In a moment of panic brought on by the pain, Harry grabbed his fallen wand and aimed it at his window. An indignant hoot was heard and Harry, sighing in relief, lowered his wand to open his window.

Hedwig and four other owls entered through the small opening. Before dropping off her parcel and flying to her perch, Hedwig gave Harry an affectionate nip on the ear. The other remaining owls however stood patiently on his desk, waiting for him to remove their burdens.

Harry untied all the letters and parcels that were tied to each of the owls and then tossed them on his bed before retrieving owl treats from his drawer. After the owls had had their quick snack and drink, they all flew out back into the night sky.

Noticing the messy scrawl of his best friend's writing Harry took the letter and opened it.

Dear Harry,

HAPPY BIRTHDAY MATE! One more year 'til we're all of age! Pig's real busy at the moment so I decided to just send this to you using one of the owls in the Post Office. Everything's going really well here though mum's made me clean the whole attic for following you to the Ministry and not informing anyone. Don't get me wrong mate, I'd follow you wherever you plan to go but what did our actions really do other than get us into more trouble?

Harry's thoughts darken once more at that. So he's blaming me for his punishments? he thought vehemently, having second thoughts in continuing the letter.

Well anyway all is good. Mum's been trying to talk Dumbledore into allowing you to stay with us here at the Burrow or at Headquarters for the rest of the summer instead of staying with those Muggles. But Dumbledore's been adamant that you stay there for the whole stretch of the holidays. Hopefully mum will manage to sway him soon because Hermione will be coming over during the last few weeks! She's also hoping he'd allow you to follow us to Diagon Alley in a few days so that we can buy our supplies together. Hopefully I've failed my Potions OWL that way I don't have see the slimy git anymore. Don't tell mum I told that to you though, she's hoping I'd continue taking it. Fat chance if Snape's teaching it.

Also Ginny's been really quiet after the events in the Ministry. She runs off at any given time and comes back hours later. Mum's starting to get worried but it's probably just a boy. Don't you think so mate? My baby sister falling in love at last. Hope your doing fine.

Ron.

P.S. The gift should come in handy

The letter from Ron did nothing to lighten his further darkening thoughts.

So Dumbledore wants to keep me secluded again this year; so much for we'll come get you as soon as possible, thought Harry, his feelings for the Headmaster sinking to an all time low.

Then there was the remark about Ginny. What could she be up to? He knew that she and Michael broke up just before the end of term.



So what could be the reason behind her taking off every now and then? Boys seemed to be a lame excuse for Harry.

Deciding that he'd be able to figure out what was wrong with Ginny when he was in a better mood, pushed the thoughts in the back of his head. Tossing the letter aside, he ripped open the small package that came with it. Inside was an elegant gold bracelet that had his name carved on the inside.

Odd. Harry thought. What'd give Ron the idea to give me jewellery? And this isn't as handy as he'd indicated. Unless of course I encounter a werewolf, in which case I can just stuff this in its mouth.

He was about to put it on when an irrational thought to keep as far away from the bracelet came to his head. Staring at the golden band, he wondered what was in it to give him such an idea. But the longer he stared at the band, the stronger the urges became. Quickly putting the bracelet back in its box before any more thoughts came to mind, he opened the letter he recognised to bear Hermione's neat handwriting.

Dear Harry,

I'm sorry I haven't written much this summer. A lot has been going on lately and I had to clear my head and set my priorities. I hope your doing fine.

Harry stared at the letter in shock. A hundred different thoughts were racing through his head, all in the range of; what's up with Hermione, what's Hermione trying to say and what's happened to Hermione. He read further down the letter to try and find answers to his friend's peculiar statements but his frown just intensified.

I've been thinking about the events that happened in the Ministry and I believe what we did was childish. Harry I know Sirius meant a lot to you but what we did was careless. We didn't even know how to deal with things that happened. I don't know how I should tell this to you but please try to understand what I'm trying to say.

I stand by what I said before we rushed into the Ministry. We should have checked first before we ran after whatever it was we ran after.

Only the thought of wanting to find out everything his friend had to say prevented Harry from ripping the paper into shreds.

We did check Hermione! The bloody house elf lied to us! he imagined himself screaming at her face. His grip on the letter tightening with every word, Harry continued.

I know you're probably thinking that it was Kreacher's fault because he lied to us, but Harry that's not his fault. He's just a simple house elf; he was just following orders. That's what I've been trying to convince you guys since fourth year. If only we'd put our house elf welfare campaign to life, none of these would have happened. That's what free elves get, the right to make their decisions. If Kreacher had had the chance, he might not have lied to us.

It's as much as your fault as it is his. He didn't know any better but you did. I'm not writing this letter to scold you Harry (okay maybe a little); I just want to tell you that your actions, no matter how noble they are, aren't always the best solution to our problems. You're a great guy Harry, a good guy but just like Professor Snape always says, you tend to get a little arrogant. I'm not saying that that's a bad thing, just that we don't always need that. I hope I'm not sounding too harsh when I say this, but I really hope that Sirius's death in your hands has taught you something.

We could have been expelled for that stupid stunt Harry. I have no idea how you managed to sway me to your plans but rest assure that the next time that happens, I'll put my foot down until you see reason. We can't always be rushing into things all the time, that's just plain idiotic. Learn and let the others do what they think is best. We're just kids and I know that I said that we have to fight for what we believe, that's what the DA was for. But I don't think we're really ready yet. I don't think you're ready to lead us yet either. Not until you get things sorted out. I'm sorry Harry.

Now I know from Ron that Professor Dumbledore has told you that you can't leave the Dursley's this summer so I suggest you stay there Harry. Don't try to run off and get into another fight that'll only get you in more trouble.

If you read this letter and still manage to be my friend, I really wish Dumbledore would allow you to join us at the Burrow in a couple of weeks.

Love,

Hermione

P.S. I hope the gift will help you get a better perspective in life

By now Harry's hand were shaking with rage. That was two of his friends blaming him for the things that they were indirectly involved in. Who were they to scold him? Who was it that had to live with the fact that everyone he loved were now dead? Who were they? They didn't know anything!

According to Hermione she wanted him to learn something from Sirius's death. Oh he did learn all right, probably just not the way she'd hinted. He learned that the next time someone managed to cross him, he'd be better prepared and they had better fear him.

It also seemed that everyone knew that Dumbledore had wanted him to stay with the Dursley's all summer except him. Big surprise there, since when was the last time the old man told him something that had something to do with him?

No longer in the mood to open up his remaining letters in case they too contained some thrashing remarks about his actions, Harry grabbed all that he had received and unceremoniously dumped them in his trunk. Fuming, he slammed his trunk shut, not caring whether he woke the Dursleys up.

Someday he'd show them. If they no longer wanted him to play the good guy and help them with their problems, then he'd gladly stop playing the role. He was feeling kind of tired with how they pictured him anyway. Let's see how they like it when he stopped playing by the rules.

A/N: Thank you so much to those who who reviewed the first chapter. Continue doing so and I'll do my best to give you guys a great story... So till next week again. Read and review

dan4eva

## Chapter 3 The Departure

The next day, Harry woke up feeling slightly in a better mood than the previous night, though he was still very pissed off with his two best friends for trying to tell him what he should and shouldn't do. He also found the idea of running away from the Dursleys and be out of Dumbledore's reach for the remaining of the summer holidays much more tempting as he got out of bed.

Formulating plans in his head on ways to escape from Privet Drive without alerting the Order, Harry moved towards his mirror and had to suppress a scream at what he saw. Instead of his unruly black hair, it was now sleek and grew just above his shoulder. Even though he was quite used to sudden surges of accidental magic, he was still quite shocked to find that he had managed to change over night.

Staring at himself at the mirror, he found that he actually liked his hair long. Sure it was a drastic change to what it used to be but he somehow felt much more defined by the new look. Plus if he did intend to shed his good boy attitude, what a better way to start than by getting a new look? And he had to be honest with himself that the new look suited his new ideals far better than the splitting-image-of-James-look. He now looked mysterious as if his long locks were indeed hiding his thoughts and in turn, it added an unpredictable air to him.

Picturing the horrified expressions of the Dursleys at his new look, Harry couldn't help but smirk. The expression that once would have been foreign on his face now looked natural on him. Shrugging his shoulders at the changes he grabbed his wand from his desk and walked down to the kitchen for a spot of breakfast.

"What do you think you're doing?" growled his uncle when he made a move to sit with them on the dinning table.

"Breakfast." he stated simply, grabbing a piece of toast from the platter in front of him. From his peripheral sight, he could see that his uncle was just about ready to explode.

"How dare you defile our meal with your freakishness?" bellowed his uncle, staring appalled at his nephew's more sinister look as he tried to reach across the table to grab his shirt.

With a casual movement of his hand, he pulled out his wand from his pocket and pointed it at his uncle. Vernon Dursley stuttered at the sight of the wand and clumsily backed off. Dudley who was sitting beside his father let out a squeak and roughly pushed his chair as far away from the table as possible causing him to come crashing down the floor. Aunt Petunia dropped the plate of ham she was holding and scuttled off to the counters.

"For once let me have a decent breakfast. Merlin, you've had me eating leftovers for the past fifteen years. Having me eat a nice breakfast for a change won't really matter. So why don't we all sit around the table, have breakfast and act as if we really care for each other?" Harry sneered, wand still pointed at his uncle.

When the Dursleys still made no move to join him for breakfast, Harry placed his wand on the table but made sure it was well within reach should his relatives try to do something stupid.

"They'll expel you for sure if you do magic on us. I know your rules." his uncle said scornfully once he thought he'd gotten back his courage.

Moving with the agility of a born flyer and four years of intense Quidditch training, Harry grabbed his wand from the table and aimed it directly at his uncle's chest. Vernon Dursley backed away so fast that he slammed on the kitchen wall. Harry got off his chair, wand still firmly in hand, stalked over to his uncle. Vernon could now be heard whimpering softly as he tried to flatten himself against the wall. His aunt and cousin were watching with bated breath as he advanced on his uncle.

"What if I don't really want to go back?" asked Harry, wand inches from his uncle's face. Vernon swallowed loudly, beads of sweat coming down his head.

"What if I've had enough?" Harry's voice now lowered to a whisper.

"You wouldn't dare," said his uncle in a small voice, eyeing the wand the entire time.

"Wouldn't dare do what?" said Harry in an incredulously cold voice, his wand against his uncle's neck like he would a knife. Aunt Petunia screeched in horror as the furniture started to vibrate violently and an invisible aura making his nephew's clothes and hair billow around him.

"Curse you all into damn bits and pieces? After all the things you've done to me, you deserve just that!" said Harry in a deadly calm voice. "You have no idea what I'm capable of doing to you right at this moment."

Harry's eyes were glinting menacingly, his face distorted by hate for his relatives. Then all of a sudden he lowered his wand and glared at the three of them. As he did this, the shaking and billowing of his clothes stopped.

"You're damn well lucky I don't find torturing you satisfying!" he growled before marching out of the room.

Vernon Dursley slid down the floor once his nephew was no longer in the room and wet himself. Petunia rushed towards her husband; that was twice in her life she had witnessed a wizard point a wand at her husband. And surprisingly the first one looked exactly like what had just happened. Under the table, Dudley was mumbling incoherently to himself, too scared to even lift his head.

Upstairs, Harry slammed the door to his room shut and collapsed on his bed. He had felt it again as he tried to curse his uncle; the same exhilarating thrill and the rushing of his blood when he had tried to curse Bellatrix. Burying his head in his hands, his mind swam into dozens of dark thoughts.

I hate them! I hate them for how they've treated me for the past fifteen years!

Shaking his head at an oncoming headache he was feeling, he knew he wouldn't be able to stay here anymore, not with what he had just done. It was not that he was sorry for what he did; just that he didn't want to stay here and get caught if he did manage to lose his control. Deciding that it would be best if he just left, he grabbed all his things under the loose floorboard and dumped them in his trunk. After ensuring that nothing was left in his room, Harry put on a

black cloak and dragged his trunk and owl cage down the stairs. He then went to the cupboard under the stairs to retrieve his broom and cauldron.

On his way out to the door, he caught sight of the Dursleys huddled together in the living room as if they were riding out a particularly violent storm. When his uncle saw him staring at them, he moved to the front to protect his family.

"Get out of my house NOW!" he bellowed though he was clearly still shaken up.

Harry stared at them until his uncle looked away from his hard gaze, he sneered. "I am leaving. But I swear this isn't over yet. Mark my words, uncle, this is only the beginning." He then left them cowering at his words.

Once he was out in the pavement, he raised his wand and seconds later the violently purple Knight Bus appeared before him.

"Mornin, 'Arry. Where you gettin at now?" asked Stan Shunpike, the bus' eccentric conductor.

"London, Stan. Just drop me off in London," said Harry setting Hedwig free so that she could fly ahead of him. Stan grabbed his trunk and cauldron while Harry shouldered his broom and made his way to the back of the bus. With a loud BANG, the Knight Bus rolled down the streets.

"So watcha gonna do in London this time?" asked Stan, trying to make small talk with the Boy-Who-Lived.

Harry who was not really in the mood to tell anyone what he was up to since he knew the Order would be out looking for him when they finally realize he was no longer with the Dursleys, gave Stan a very vague answer. "I'm meeting someone."

"Ah." said Stanley. "It wouldn't be the Minister again, would it, 'Arry?"

"No. Definitely not Fudge," Harry said more to himself. Stan watched him for a few more minutes before he left to perform his conductor duties. The bus halted to a stop outside a grimy house in the country before it made its way to the familiar surroundings of the city. The

bumpy ride from Surrey to London took about an hour and soon enough the Knight Bus stopped in front of the familiar signboard of the Leaky Cauldron.

"Er Stan, could you drop me off to the nearest dark alley?" asked Harry tentatively. He had absolutely no plan to barge into the pub looking like what he did now. First he needed to disguise himself then he would be free to do what he wanted.

"Sure thing, 'arry." replied Stan. The bus jerked to life once more and after awhile the bus stopped again; this time a few blocks from the pub.

"Thanks, Stan." said Harry Hedwig's cage tucked under his arm and dragged his remaining baggage out of the bus.

"See yah again soon!" waved Stan before the bus left in another loud BANG.

Making sure that no one was watching him, he walked towards the dark alley and pulled out his wand. While travelling in the bus, Harry had formulated a plan to try and evade the Order for as long as possible. He'd also figured out how to do magic outside school without getting detected by the Ministry. He knew that the Ministry only detected underage magic where underage wizards could be found. So if he performed magic where underage wizards could not be detected like a place filled with other fully trained wizards who constantly used magic, then he would be safe to perform magic undetected. Now all he had to do now was get as close to the Leaky Cauldron without getting recognised and perform a glamour charm on himself.

Charming himself to look as different from how Harry Potter looked like, he turned his hair blonde, the same way any respected wizard would. With his facial features looking sharper and his complexion lighter than before, he emerged from the shadows and strode over to the Leaky Cauldron.

A/N: I would love to thank all of my reviewers for their wonderful feedbacks and encouragement. I'll do my best to write a really great story for you guys... I'll I'd like to thank the "Pope" for all his support and his keen interest on my fic... Til' next week...

dan4eva



## Chapter 4 Knockturn Alley

The whole pub fell silent as a man with long blonde hair and black robes stepped in, his trunk trailing behind him. At first glance it looked as if Lucius Malfoy had decided to grace them with his presence. Yet at closer inspection, the man had hazel eyes instead of the Malfoy blue and he looked much younger than the Malfoy patriarch. Plus the man lacked the condescending air most of high society wizards had.

The man moved dejectedly towards the barman and the pub went back to minding its own business.

"I'm in need of a room," said the man in a gruff voice.

Tom the barman stared at him from head to toe, as if searching his memory if he'd seen him before. "How many days, sir?" inquired Tom once he was sure the man was unfamiliar to him.

"Just for a couple of days until I find a place to stay," said the man.

"Very well, Mr –?" Tom looked at the man again.

"Night. Tobias Night," the man said smoothly. A look of surprise flashed on the barman's face.

"Ah... Mr. Night. Very well, room 12 is vacant," said Tom handing out the key to the room.

"I'll take it." The man grabbed the key from the barman's hand and marched upstairs to the rooms. Tom stared after the stranger as he levitated his trunk up the stairs.

Opening the door to his room, Tobias Night saw a snowy white owl swoop through the window and perch itself on top of his wardrobe. Coaxing the bird to come down, he rummaged his robe for an owl treat.

"C'mere girl. It's just me," he said softly, abandoning his earlier gruff voice, waved the treat at the bird. The bird hooted at him before flying down to settle on his shoulders. Hedwig gave his ear an affectionate nip as if trying to convey to him that she had indeed

recognised him. Tobias stroked her glossy feathers then fed her the owl treat.

"I don't want you staying here all the time, okay? I can't be seen with you. You're recognisable as Harry's owl and I don't want them to find me yet. You've got to find some other place to stay," said Tobias still stroking her feathers. "But you're a smart owl, you know when the right time is to come back to me."

Tobias moved towards the open window, ready to send his owl back outside. Hedwig's large amber eyes stared at him in understanding and he gave her a soft nudge. Soon she was a white speck in the sky. He watched her fly away until she disappeared from sight.

Tobias spent his first few days relishing the fact that he had a whole month to do everything he pleased. The first thing he did when he had checked-in at the Inn above the pub was go to Gringotts and withdraw a bag full of gold and bought everything he fancied though he did put restrictions to what he deemed he required.

He had yet to open the Hogwarts letter he had received on his birthday. In fact, everything he had received on that day, he had dumped at the very bottom of his trunk. He refused to look at them for fear of losing more of his control once he'd read what his "friends" wrote about him.

So it was with enthusiasm that he was now stepping out of Diagon Alley and entering the sinister streets of Knockturn Alley. He had been here once when he was merely twelve years old, about to start his second year at the famous institution and he was eager to return. No longer was he a scared twelve year who would hide inside a cupboard at the first sign of a threat, he was now sixteen, nearly of age and was damn better knowledgeable at spells.

He walked down the length of the dark and dingy streets of Knockturn Alley. Nothing much had changed since his last visit but there were noticeably more dark artefacts on display. His dark robe covered with a black cloak – with its hood hiding most of his face in darkness, kept the passers-by from taking too much notice of him. As a matter of fact, his attire made him less conspicuous as it seemed to be the norm in here to prevent anyone from recognizing your face.

Spotting the battered sign of Borgin and Burkes, he entered it for the second time in his life. Walking with the necessary air to pull off his disguise, Tobias made his way around the shop looking at the various displays of dark artefacts. The severed hand on top of the counter that he knew was the same as the one he had seen the last time caught his eye.

Slowly running a finger down the bloodied hand, an annoyed voice spoke beside him.

"I don't think you could afford that even if you did sell that cloak of yours."

Tobias spun around to come face to face with the gaunt features of Mr. Borgin. "Do you have any other item like the Hand of Glory?" he asked calmly, ignoring the scrutinizing look he was getting from Borgin.

"And why would you be interested in those kinds of items?" Borgin drawled.

"Do you have any?" pressed Tobias firmly, glaring at the man without having to lower down his hood.

Borgin seemed to have been taken back by Tobias's vicious tone and was now reverting back to the same oily voice he remembered the shopkeeper had used on Malfoy Sr. three years ago.

"Follow me, sir." gestured Borgin to the door behind the counter.

"I think not." replied Tobias strongly. He had no plans to go inside a dark room with a man he knew to be serving Death Eaters.

"But, sir, what you want, I do not intend to display in public," argued the shopkeeper.

"I do not care for your dilemma. So why don't you just get in there and show it to me before I turn your shop into a furnace?" said Tobias, leaning over the counter.

Borgin seemed to be checking him out to see whether he would come through to his threat and he must have seen something beyond his hood because he quickly sauntered to his storeroom.

Moments later, he returned carrying an object covered with a purple velvet cloth. Pulling the cloth away revealed an even more severed looking hand. This one even had cuts on its skin that seemed to still be bleeding.

"The Hand of Bereavement," Borgin said in a low voice.

Tobias stared at the hand in fascination; he had never seen something look so dead yet so alive at the same time. He was about to run his finger through one of its bleeding wounds when a blemished hand swatted his away.

He glared at the man for hitting him and Borgin, surprised at his earlier action was staring at the space where Tobias' hand was once placed a moment ago.

"My apologies, sir." bowed Borgin. "But one does not touch the Hand of Bereavement if one does not intend to control it. You must first offer it your blood or else it will attack you."

"What do you think I plan to do with it? Use it as a Halloween costume?" retorted Tobias. "Of course I intend to buy it."

"How much?" he asked forcefully before the shopkeeper could say anything else.

Borgin's eyes narrowed at him. "Who are you?" he asked dropping his oily mannerisms.

Tobias hid his panic from showing on his face even though it was still in the shadow of his hood. "Night. Tobias Night, now how much is the Hand of Bereavement?" he said flatly

If nothing else, the shopkeeper's eyes narrowed even more at the mention of the name. He stared at Tobias as if trying to measure him up and said indifferently, "Fifty Galleons."

Tobias was about to argue the absurdness of the price but decided against it. He didn't want to increase the man's suspicions of him. Grabbing the right amount of gold from his money pouch, Tobias paid the man.

Once Borgin was satisfied that he had received the right amount of gold, he covered the severed hand with the same velvet cloth and placed it in a wooden box.

"Keep it in this box unless you want to use it," informed Borgin, handing the box to Tobias.

Tobias nodded in appreciation and moved to leave the shop but before he could reach the door, he turned back to speak to the shopkeeper.

"Do you by any chance sell books on the Dark Arts? And I don't want riffraff like the ones you put on display here." he said.

Borgin looked insulted at the remark and held the door open for him. "I suggest you try the bookshop down the street and good day to you, sir!" he said brusquely before slamming the door shut, putting the closed sign on the door.

Tobias returned to his room hours later laden with shopping bags. Other than the severed hand from Borgin and Burke's, Tobias had also bought numerous books on the Dark Arts. He mostly chose the ones that explained the Dark Arts in ways a Hogwarts professor would never tell a student. There were also books on the various Dark Arts that he was eager to read before the start of term.

Climbing on his bed to get a good night's rest after an eventful day, he failed to see another hooded figure out on the streets walk back into the shadows after watching him the whole day.

A/N: Love you all. Your reviews keep me going... So please remember to click the pretty little purple button you see at the end and click review... goes on her knees and offers the readers a pen and paper...

dan4eva

## Chapter 5 Arguments

The great Albus Dumbledore was sitting ominously in his circular office, his fingers intertwined on top of his desk. It has exactly been one week since the fateful day the wards at Number 4 Privet Drive informed him that Harry Potter was no longer within the confines of his protection. The first thing that the Order realized was that the wards had collapsed; thus every possible member was dispatched to the house only to find it empty. At that point the Order had completely panicked.

They had no idea of the whereabouts of the Boy-who-lived or if he had indeed been kidnapped or worse – tortured.

With every single member on high alert, Albus Dumbledore was left to take the brunt of the strain of making sure that the Ministry did not take it into their own hands to control the situation and inform the press. If the public ever got wind that their saviour was missing, mass panic would occur making them extremely vulnerable to attacks. Then there was also the task of making sure Voldemort didn't get his hands on the boy before them; all in all not one of the best days of his long life.

A sharp knock on his door brought Dumbledore back to the taxing present.

"Come in," he answered. A haggard looking Remus Lupin entered the room. It had been days since he'd last got a good night sleep and last week's full moon hadn't been kind to him. A month had passed since Sirius's untimely death and he had yet to get over the fact that he was truly gone. He supposed that some part of him still wished that this was all one horrid dream and that Sirius would soon come and wake him up by slobbering drool at him.

For years he had believed the man to be the one who had betrayed them to the Dark only to be proven wrong to his delight twelve years later. But how cruel the events twisted themselves, he'd barely had his reunion with the man and now he was gone. And Harry seemed to be sharing the same fate.

"Ah, Remus, have a seat." Dumbledore gestured at the armchair beside his desk.

Remus looked as if he'd prefer to be standing rather than to sit down but he none the less moved towards the indicated seat.

"Albus, we've located the Dursleys. They were holidaying in Majorca," informed Remus though he looked none the happier.

Dumbledore must have noticed his expression for he asked, "That is wonderful news, my boy. But why is it that you do not seem even the slightest bit pleased about it?"

Remus fidgeted slightly in his seat and refused to look at the old man. "Harry was not with them."

If the news had troubled Dumbledore, he didn't show it in his face. In fact he just stared calmly ahead, his blue eyes clouded as if he'd long ago expected the whole thing to occur.

"You knew, didn't you? You knew Harry wouldn't be with them," asked Remus.

"No. Of course not, my boy. I have never nor will I ever claim to know such things." Dumbledore said in a calm voice.

"But did you suspected it?" asked Remus.

"Yes. The Dursleys, I believe, would never have allowed him to follow them. But I had always, always hoped that they would do otherwise." replied Dumbledore simply looking the aged wizard that he was.

Remus sat quietly in his seat, hoping that the boy he'd come to love was safe. He didn't know what else he would do if he lost Harry too. When James and Lily died, he was so devastated that he shunted himself from society. Sirius' death had caught him completely off guard that until now he hadn't quite felt its complete blow. But he knew had to pull himself together if he wanted to see Harry again.

After awhile Remus spoke again weariness evident his voice. "Did you know that he left the house willingly as well?"

Dumbledore's eyes widen at this information. "Harry left the protection of the wards willingly?"

"Yes. Once put under threat, the Dursleys spilled everything, though they were still very reluctant to give us information. It's as if they were scared to tell us what had happened. We only managed to get out of them if they knew where their nephew was, which unfortunately for us they do not," said Remus callously, looking expectantly at his old mentor. "Why would Harry leave willingly, Albus?" Worry slowly dripping into his voice. "They're his family for Merlin's sake.

If nothing else, Dumbledore looked much older than before. "I have a few ideas but let us hope they're all false, or else we'll have a situation in our hands."

Remus stared at the old man in confusion but Dumbledore did not clarify further.

"Listen to me, Remus, get everyone together; we must find Harry at all cost. Take the Dursleys to Headquarters and make sure the Ministry does not find out about this," ordered Dumbledore, signalling the end of their conversation.

Remus nodded stiffly and headed towards the door, Dumbledore called him back however before he could reach the handle. He turned around to see that the old man had got out of his chair and was now standing with his hands clasped behind him looking as troubled as could be in front of his window.

"Please tell Severus to come to my office at once."

"Yes, sir." and with that he left the Headmaster to his thoughts.

A few minutes later a sharp knock could be heard once more on the office door. A dourly looking Severus Snape strode over to the Headmaster.

"You called for me, Albus?" asked the Potions' Master standing before the desk in all his dark glory.

"I did, Severus. How did your task go? It's been a week and you've yet to give me your full report," said Dumbledore in a manner showing his complete displeasure.



Severus hid his annoyance at the Headmaster's tone, instinctively raising as many Occlumency shields as he could.

On the same day the wards collapsed in Privet Drive, Dumbledore had ordered him, his supposed trusted spy, to find as much information as he could amongst the Death Eaters on the whereabouts of his precious Potter. Of course he had no choice but to go, even though he had more productive things to do like making potions than searching high and low for the arrogant brat.

But his pursuits proved meaningless since even the Death Eaters knew nothing of Potter's disappearance. So he took it upon himself to simply not inform the Headmaster of his findings since there really was nothing to report. Yet the most important reason of his blatant refusal to report to the Headmaster, he would never tell; definitely not to the old man and his ridiculous Order.

"I have been busy, Albus, surely you know that the Dark Lord –" started Severus indifferently.

"Severus, what I asked of you is of much greater importance than what Voldemort would ever want. And failure to do what I want you to do will have far more dire consequences than your Dark Lord can ever come up with!" said Dumbledore coldly at the stoic professor, staring him hard in the eye.

Severus' expression darkened immediately at the obvious threat made by the Headmaster and it was taking much of his self-control to prevent his true self from revealing at the old wizard.

"I won't ask you again, Severus. So tell me now how your search went," pressed Dumbledore, his tone hard and demanding.

Severus stared at the Headmaster, making sure that the old man saw only what he wanted him to see.

Dumbledore pressed harder than he'd expected at his shields but Severus was too strong of an Occlumens for him to determine anything else other than the fact that the Death Eaters knew nothing of Harry's location. Dropping his gaze at the Potions Master, Dumbledore strode back into his high-backed chair.

Staggering a bit at Dumbledore's forceful entry into his head, Severus snapped back from his mind and went to stand before Dumbledore's desk.

"If that is all you have found out, you may leave, Severus." said Dumbledore in a weary voice, his expression no longer that of a harden master but of a man who has fought far too many battles. "However, defy me like that again, Severus, and I will not hesitate to do it. You know what I mean," said Dumbledore dangerously.

Severus was used to the threats Dumbledore threw at him during their brief meetings and tried to keep them in stride. But like any human being, he could only take as much. Nodding stiffly at the Headmaster, he marched brusquely out of the office. "Soon, Albus, soon you'll no longer have those threats over me," hissed Severus darkly under his breath once he was deep in within the dungeons. "Soon..."

A/N: Okay, that's the end of the fifth one. I hope it interested you. I didn't want to put too much info or stuff in it. I want your guesses, ideas and most importantly you precious REVIEWS! Til' nxt post!

dan4eva

## Chapter 6 Strange Conversations

Tobias walked back into the Leaky Cauldron in apprehension. The whole day he had felt that someone was following him. Yet every time he turned around, no one was there. Either the person stalking him was a professional or his paranoia of the Order finding him was finally getting to him.

Settling on a table at the very back of the pub, Tobias massaged his temple to rid himself of the annoying headache he had constantly been having the past few days and ordered himself a hot plate of lunch. He was halfway through his meal when the pub's front door caught his attention. Remus Lupin together with Mad Eye Moody had just entered the place and was heading directly towards the barman.

Tobias' heart quickened. Was it them who had been following him the whole day? He tried to remain as calm as possible and keep himself in the shadows, thanking his foresight for having picked the most secluded table.

Remus and Moody stayed in the pub longer than Tobias had expected and more than once, Moody's magical eye landed on the spot he has sitting in. He was also willing to bet that Remus was purposely delaying their departure so that Moody could search the place completely. It was at this moment that Tobias was grateful he had sent Hedwig away for he knew she would give him away.

When Tobias thought the two would never leave, Remus stood up from the bar and paid for their drink. With one final look around the place, they left the pub. Tobias breathed a sigh of relief at the sight of their robes exiting the premises.

"Were you able to find anything?" asked Remus once they were out on the streets, pulling his cloak tighter around his person.

"Nothing out of the ordinary," replied Moody curtly. "Did the barman tell you anything?"

"No. I wasn't expecting him to hide there anyway. Too public for him; people could easily recognise him," replied Remus.

Moody nodded and once they were in an empty alley, Apparated to look for Harry somewhere else.

Tobias tossed a couple of Sickles on the table and was about to make his way back to his room when he felt that penetrating feeling one would feel if someone was watching you intently. Fearing that Moody had somehow decided to return to the pub, Tobias turned to look at the entrance but no one else had entered the room.

Trepidation slowly rising in him, Tobias carefully scanned the room for the person whom he knew was stalking him. There were a couple of odd characters in the pub but that was to be expected considering the place attracts a variety of magical people from all over the country. So those people he just glanced over. He was in search of someone who was trying to fit in; someone who was not supposed to be there in the first place.

He knew his search was proving to be futile but movements from across the room caught his attention.

Tobias narrowed his eyes so as to get a better look at the dark corner across his table; a black hooded person was sitting by the table and was staring straight at him. Tobias' eyes widen in shock as the person nodded its head in his direction, acknowledging his presence. Then the person did something Tobias never expected; the person jerked its head to the side as if inviting him to come over.

A shiver ran down Tobias' spine as he felt the person's penetrating eyes make contact with his. And as if the person had latched him on some invisible rope, Tobias moved cautiously towards the hooded person's table.

Once he was standing right in front of the stranger, Tobias went rigid. Some unknown force had drawn him to this person and it scared him. What if this person was sent by the Order, or worse by the Voldemort? Yet despite his uneasiness at being cornered like this, Tobias glared coldly at the person sitting before him. He stood that way for at least a minute as both he and the stranger stared at each other. (Though all Tobias could see was the shadowy outline of the person because the hood was still over the person's face).

"You're the one who's been following me for days," said Tobias in a harsh whisper after sometime.

The person nodded its head and continued to survey him.

Tobias tried not to wither under the stranger's intense gaze and asked another question. "Who are you?" his tone a little bit harder than he'd intended.

The stranger seemed to be pondering whether to answer the question and gestured for Tobias to take a seat, stalling to answer the inquiry.

Reluctantly taking the seat opposite his mysterious stalker, Tobias slowly pulled his wand out and readied it under the table. It would appear pretty stupid to converse with a complete stranger without at least preparing himself for the unexpected.

Seeing that Tobias had calmed slightly at the sudden encounter, the stranger replied, "You may call me Lin."

"You're a witch," Tobias expressed before he could stop himself. He was startled at the sound of a warm feminine voice that had come out from the stranger, he had expected the person to be a wizard, an aged wizard at that.

A warm and gentle laughter emitted from the witch; totally not what Tobias had expected from a supposed stalker. "I'm glad we got over the issue my sexuality in such a short space of time."

Tobias suppressed a smirk that was threatening to break free on his face. Instead he stared defiantly at the eyes he knew were watching his every move under the black hood.

"Do you work for the Order?" Tobias blurted out, no longer able to control his curiosity.

This time the warmth of her voice faded to a cold and sinister laughter. "I? Work for the Order? I'd have you know that I would rather die a most heinous death than work under the thumb of Albus Dumbledore," she said with such vehemence that Tobias started to wonder whether she was Voldemort in disguise. That did nothing to ease his anxiety at the situation.

"If... if you don't work for the Order, then why are you following me?" asked Tobias.

"Can't you think of any reasons why I would do such a thing - Harry?" said Lin innocently.

Tobias' heart skipped a beat as he stared wide eye at the strange witch in front of him; nearly dropping his wand.

"Caught you off guard there, didn't I, Harry?" chuckled the witch at his surprised expression.

"B... b...but how?" stuttered Tobias.

"Did you honestly think that that simple glamour of yours could fool me? It might work for the Order, but for me you've got to do more than that," she said haughtily.

Tobias brushed off the comment about his Charms ability. "That still doesn't answer my question," he pressed on, feeling more and more uncomfortable the longer he stayed in the woman's presence.

"I guess it really doesn't, does it? Well the next time you try to come up with a fake identity, try to pick one that hasn't been buried for fifteen years. A dead name walking around tends to draw unwanted attention. Now we know you don't want that, do you?" said Lin, tipping her head to the side in question, a smirk playing unseen on her face.

Though he could not see it, Tobias could literally feel the mocking smile he knew was behind her hood. "I meant the other question."

"Which one?" asked Lin.

"Why are you following me?" Tobias hissed furiously at her.

"Ah, that one," cried Lin as if she'd just heard something illuminating. "I never did give you a proper answer now, did I? How did we ever verge away from such an important question?" her voice dripping with sarcasm.

"How indeed," replied Tobias with just as much deride. He was starting to get annoyed at how childishly she kept dodging the question.

"Come now, Harry." Tobias winced at the mention of his real name. If Lin had noticed, she chose to ignore it. "We've only just met. You can't possibly expect me to reveal all of my secrets to you; many of them would make your head spin," she said a little too sweetly.

Tobias saw the bait as soon as she'd opened her mouth but refused to take it. "That may apply to me but I certainly don't believe this is the first time you've seen me. So unless you don't plan to go and tell whoever it is you are working for that you've lost me, I suggest you tell me now," he whispered harshly, leaning across the table to her personal space.

"My...my. When they said you were difficult and temperamental, they weren't kidding," she said, crossing her arms before her chest, unnerved by his sudden movements. "Well if that's the way you treat girls on your first meeting, I'd hate to be your girlfriend."

"I assure you that you are not my cup of tea. And can't I make an exception to someone who keeps her face concealed throughout the length of the conversation?" sneered Tobias.

"Now if you must know, Harry -," he winced again. "- concealing oneself and blending into the dark is a much better method to use to follow someone than your silly glamour charms. The only reason you could see me was because I wanted to be seen. However other than that, you'd be hard pressed to spot me in a crowd."

"That still doesn't answer my earlier question!" cried Tobias, pushing himself off his chair to come inches from her face. Surprisingly that at such close proximity, he still could not see anything but a dark silhouette.

"Impatient are we?" taunted the witch and added under her breath, "Must get it from the father."

"What did you just say?" asked Tobias, straining to catch every word she said.

"I said perhaps if you could give me back my breathing space I could tell you," she snapped at him.

Tobias flushed slightly in the cheeks at this and quickly backed off and sat on his seat.

"Thank you. I guess I do owe it to you to tell the truth," said Lin.

"Why that is the best thing you've ever said throughout the length of our conversation," exclaimed an exasperated Tobias.

Lin laughed once more at the annoyance playing wonderfully on his face and just couldn't resist on a gibe. "And here I thought you finding out I was a girl, was the best thing that ever happened in our meeting."

At the hard look on Tobias' face, Lin turned serious once more. "Right, why am I following you. It's really simple; I'm here to make sure the Order doesn't find you."

Tobias' eyes narrowed. Of all the possible reasons on why this woman was trailing him, that never came to mind.

Once she had told him the answer to his question, Lin stood up quietly from her chair and adjusted the hood on her face. As she was about to leave their little corner, someone grabbed her arm from the back.

With reflexes Tobias never imagined she could possess, Lin had him at wand point. "Never - do - that - again," she hissed dangerously in his ear.

"Who do you work for?" Tobias asked, trying not to cringe at the power radiating off of her.

Lin eyed him dangerously under her hood, her eyes gleaming madly before releasing her hold on him. "I'm afraid that's another question for another time, Harry," she said, all edge gone from her body.

"But if you feel that the Order has finally overstepped its boundaries about you," Lin said before Tobias could interrupt, pulling out a platinum band with intricate runes and symbols from her robe. "- use



this and say the rune that you think burns the brightest." She then handed it to him.

Tobias was captivated by the way the runes coursed around the band; like the current of a river would on a calm day. A bright glinting rune on the underside of the band caught his attention.

"Lin, what does this mean?" he asked, lifting his gaze away from the rune. But Lin was no longer there; he was all alone once more in a dark corner. He also failed to notice the palest of blue light vanish as soon as Lin left the room.

Returning his attention to the odd looking runes and symbols, Tobias began to contemplate all that he had found out today. It wasn't much but he did find out that the Order was indeed looking for him. And someone else was preventing said Order from finding him.

And now he was expected to choose which side he would follow? He hardly knew the new opposing side nor trusted the side he was barely clinging on to. The tension in his head intensified once more causing him to blanch and run his hand through his head.

Man, why couldn't easy decisions just come to him?

A/N: How was that? Did you like Lin? This time i won't post any earlier until i get 40 reviews. I just really wanted to get this out for you guys... 'til next time...

dan4eva

## Chapter 7 Of Silver And Gold

A door slammed loudly across the hallway causing the door to violently swing on its hinges and a dozen or so portraits which hung on the wall to scream in indignation.

Coming out from one of the rooms to check who had come into their home in such a rage, was a beautiful girl with long wavy dark hair, wearing a pair of blue jeans and a casual red t-shirt. A golden chain was visible through the neck opening of her shirt.

"Was that your father?" asked a woman who had just hurriedly come up the stairs at the sound of the slamming door.

The girl turned towards the woman. "Yes My – yes, mother."

The woman smiled at her daughter's slip of the tongue and walked with a slight limp towards her. "Why don't you go get some Calming Draught while I go talk to him?"

"Yes, mother," bowed the girl heading for the Potions lab.

"And give it a couple of drops of Vodka while you're at it, we might need it," the woman said in an afterthought, her hand at the door knob.

The girl looked at her mother sceptically but the woman just nodded at her. Once her daughter had left the hall, the woman made for the door. Her husband must have placed a Silencing charm on the room for when she had opened it she could hear the sounds of breaking glass and someone cursing as bad as a sailor.

"That conniving old COOT!" a man screamed as the sound of more breaking objects ensued.

The woman closed the door immediately preventing anymore sounds from escaping the room. Casually leaning on the door frame, she waited until her husband tire from his rant.

"How dare HE!" the man continued, grabbing a table ornament and tossing it to the wall, causing it to shatter into bits and pieces.

"If I could just get my hands on him—" he screamed, taking a glass figure the shape of a raven from the mantelpiece.

"Ah ah!" the woman interrupted, making her presence known to her husband. The man stopped midway through his tirade and turned wide eye at the woman by the door.

"What?" he exclaimed. The woman moved tentatively towards him and grabbed the hands that held the glass figure.

"Break anything in this room but this," said the woman taking the glass raven away from her husband and placing it back on the mantelpiece. "It was uncle's gift on our wedding day. Remember?"

The man stared at his wife in disbelief and pulled away in a huff, sulking to the empty couch in the room.

"Now what's gotten your wand into a knot?" asked the woman gently, making her way to his chair.

The man ignored her and stared angrily at the wall before him as if daring it into a staring competition.

"You know, dear, that I don't fancy being ignored," said the woman, crossing her arms on her chest. The man stopped his staring and turned murderous dark eyes at the woman's direction.

"Who do you think?" he sneered at her. "Who do you could make me act like this?" Spreading his hand out to indicate the destruction he had caused. "Who else could make a bloody puppet out of me?"

The woman lowered her hands to grab hold of her husband's larger ones and knelt down in front of him, sighing she said, "I know, my Dark Prince, and I'm sorry."

"I want him dead," he spat malevolently not having heard what she said. "Why won't you let me kill him?"

The woman stiffened. Releasing her hold on her husband, her eyes narrowing darkly at the man before her and said in a voice so cold it could have frozen a man. "You know I would gladly kill that man a hundred times over just for the things he's done to you. And you know as well as I that if he were right here right now, I would kill him

in the most brutal way I could ever imagine. But we can't afford for him to figure us out. So don't you dare tell me I don't want him dead!"

She stood up angrily and stalked off to one of the windows in the room. Looking out as the trees that surrounded their manor swayed slightly in the wind, she said in a low voice, "I know it's hard, my love. It's been so long; how is she? That is who you're worried about, isn't?"

The man watched as his wife lost her cool at him and suddenly felt ashamed at having snapped rudely at her. He walked uncertainly towards her. Standing behind her he said in a strained voice, "She is coping but I don't know how much longer she'd be able to resist it. She's is strong but she is also getting old."

"We'll get through this, you know. Uncle is back, the Queen is still here, everyone's still here," the woman said turning around to face her husband. She only reached up to his shoulders so she had to tilt her head a bit.

They stared at each other; black to green before the man pulled her into a gentle embrace. "I'm sorry about earlier, love. I shouldn't have taken it out on you. Please forgive me."

"It's okay. I understand. I daresay we'll all be having those kinds of episodes this year. Just don't say that I don't want this any more than you do," said his wife who was resting her head on his broad chest.

Someone knocking on the door made husband and wife pull away from each other. The girl who had been patiently waiting outside the door until her parents sorted out their issues, walked into the room.

"Ah, Seline. Wonderful timing as always," smiled the woman at her daughter.

"Mother. Father," greeted Seline, closing the door and moving to the direction of her parents. "I'm guessing Father won't be needing this anymore?" she pulled out a vial from her pockets and handed it to her mother.

"A Calming Draught?" said the man looking at his wife in confusion.

"Yes. With a touch of Vodka," she said wryly. "Now drink up."

"What makes you think you two could feed me my own potions?" he asked incredulously staring at both of the witches.

"You nearly broke uncle's gift and I'd rather have you drunk and incapacitated for a couple of hours until you've actually cooled down. Plus I don't want you breaking more of my ornaments," said the woman.

"I thought you said you understood!" cried the man. "And I'm perfectly fine. Thank you very much."

"We've been married for far too long, love. I know you. Now drink that up before I get a spoon," she said pointedly causing her husband to blanch and for her daughter to snigger. "Seline, dear, make sure your father drinks it. I've got to tend to my garden now, if you'll excuse me."

Limping her way out of the room, she pointed one last time at the potion vial then glared at her husband before heading towards the gardens. She could be heard humming softly as she made her way to her garden.

The man stared at the potion in his hand in disgust. "Seline –" he started.

"Ah ah, dad." said Seline wagging a lone finger in front of his face. "You're not getting out of this. Just drink it and get it over with. It's only a potion, why so scared?" she raised an eyebrow at him.

"You are so like your mother!" he grumbled good-naturedly.

"Why thank you, dad. I do strive to annoy you as much as I can." she said bowing mockingly at her father.

"You insolent child!" he exclaimed making his daughter laugh and stick out her tongue at him before getting out of the room.

SsSsSsSsSsSsSsS

After his encounter with the mysterious Lin, Tobias tried everything to locate her once more. But he no sooner stepped out to Diagon Alley that he discovered that he indeed could not find her if she did not want to be found.

So two days after his strange meeting, he settled back once more into his earlier routine of having meals in the pub and spending the remaining of his time exploring the magic alleys. However he now spent every waking minute before going to bed examining the intricately carved band he had received from the hooded witch.

When he first gave the band his undivided attention, he had realized that he could actually understand most of the runes that were flowing magically in the sea of silver. Yet the most remarkable thing about him being able to read the runes, was the fact that he'd never studied Ancient Runes before. Therefore it really intrigued him that on his first night with the band, he'd been able to translate one of the runes which surprisingly read "family".

And it was during one of his nightly inspection of the silvery white ring that he'd received a letter from a minute owl.

"Pig?" wondered Tobias, placing the ring on top of his dresser to open the window so as to allow the tiny bird entry to his room.

Pigwidgeon zoomed through the open window and flew erratically above his head. "Pig, get down here!" Tobias cried, reaching up to catch the bird. Stretching up his right arm, he pulled the excited bird down making it hoot in annoyance.

"All right, you crazy owl, what has your owner sent me this time?" sneered Tobias, untying the letter that was attached to its leg. Tossing a spare owl treat at the owl, he got started in reading the first letter from his friend since his birthday.

Harry,

Where are you mate? I can't believe you took off just like that! Where are you and when will you be back? We've been looking for you for over a week now. Everyone's been worried sick especially mum. She keeps saying that you've somehow gotten badly injured that's why you haven't contacted us.

Why didn't you at least inform me? Is this because Dumbledore wouldn't let you stay with us for the summer? Hermione wants me to say that that's extremely childish of you. She's been here since last Tuesday and she's pretty worried too but says you're being irrational by making everyone else worry about you. I agree with her in that mate. You are being irrational.

So please owl us where you are now. We're your best friends surely you can tell us your reasons for running away. Dumbledore only wants the best for you, please go back home.

Ron

P.S. Are you wearing the wristlet I sent you for your birthday? It would really help us.

Tobias stared at the letter in his hands, not quite sure why it had dampened his spirits so much. He did feel quite bad for making the Weasley matriarch worry about him but then that guilt was quickly over-ridden by his sudden bitterness towards his friends. He couldn't really explain why he was so mad at them. Every since he read the letters they'd sent him on his birthday, he hadn't had a single good thought about them. Perhaps it had to do with them failing to understand him; they've never really experienced all the horrors he'd gone through.

Over the course of five years they had been together they might have helped him, reluctant though they were at first, but they were never really in danger, were they? It was always he, Harry, and not they, who had to face Voldemort over and over again to last him a lifetime. He could hazard a guess that if Ron and Hermione were to really face Voldemort and not just fear his name, they'd be dead ten times over by now.

For years they had persistently told him that they would always be by his side, helping him and supporting all the way. Yet the moment they enter into battle with him, the moment they get a small glimpse of all he had been through – they leave him hanging. Blamed him even for the mistakes they've all jointly committed; for the blunders that were unfortunately unavoidable.

For the first time after years of fending for himself in the Dursleys, following years of suffering the wizarding world's onslaught and

constant shifting view of him, he now knew how it was to truly feel alone. Abandoned by his supposed friends, forever misunderstood; eternally suffering in the dark.

He gripped the letter tightly in his hands, catching the last few lines of the letter, Dumbledore only wants the best for you, please go back home.

So keeping me isolated and ignorant for two summers in a row is the best for me? he thought spitefully, anger slowly bubbling within him. Last year, thinking about the renowned Headmaster gave him an irresistible urge to attack his ancient façade and this year was no different. The old man may have told him of the prophecy that made him a target at the age of one, but then instead of helping him train so as to give him a fighting chance of winning, he'd abandoned him once more; dumped him back to the jolly old Dursleys.

Then there was that comment again about the gold wristlet he'd received on his birthday. He had yet to figure out why Ron would send him jewellery of all things for his birthday, and then he remembered that strong urge he felt when he touched the wristlet. Wondering what really the purpose of the damned object was, he searched his trunk for the said gift.

Having tossed most of his belongings to the floor, he found the package he was looking for at the bottom of his trunk. Opening it, he once again felt the strong urge to keep as far away from the object as possible. And then it hit him right on the head like a pair of rampaging Hippogriffs – the reason behind his unexplainable notions.

Grabbing the book he had bought from a bookstore in Knockturn Alley from his bedside table, he hurriedly flipped through the pages until he found the chapter about Spell Detection. Locating the spell he needed, he pulled his wand out from within his pockets and uttered the incantation required.

"Spellis Ostendo!", swishing his wand in complicated arcs before ending with a sharp jab at the direction of the wristlet. The gold wristlet glowed bright red at the incantation making him curse angrily under his breath. He had hoped that his suspicions about the true purpose of the wristlet were wrong but those notions were crushed the moment it started glowing.



The Detection Spell he had used was used to detect spells cast on inanimate objects by making them glow a certain colour; black for Dark Magic or curses, white for Light Magic and red for tracking spells. It wasn't very specific but it still had its uses.

Staring darkly at the still brightly glowing wristlet that now lay on his desk, Tobias had finally realized why his friend had sent him the wristlet and it did nothing to subdue his mounting anger. The realization that the Order had planned all along to use a tracking spell on him like an ordinary criminal infuriated him. And to know that his friends were in on the plan to keep an eye on him made him want to storm up into Dumbledore's office and give it another bashing.

Undoubtedly it was his idea to use such a lowly plan to make sure he wouldn't run away; sending it as an innocent gift with the help of his best friend, making sure he didn't find out. That for him was a betrayal; a betrayal in its largest sense – a betrayal of trust!

Something glittering across the room brought him out of his reverie. The platinum ring he had placed earlier on top of his dresser was emitting a white light and seemed to be vibrating gently on its own. Tobias slowly walked towards the light and picked up the small object which was surprisingly warm to the touch. At closer inspection he noticed that the other runes had suddenly vanished from the ring, leaving a single rune to burn brightly on its surface.

The last words of the hooded witch suddenly flashed in head. "But if you feel that the Order has finally overstepped its boundaries about you, use this and say the rune that you think burns the brightest."

Had the Order indeed overstepped its boundaries? YES! a strong voice shouted loudly in his head. Knowing that he needed answers to the reasons behind his actions and that of the Order's, he placed the ring on his ring finger and concentrated on the lone rune carved on the metal.

"Home," he whispered, unaware that he had spoken it in a different language. The moment the strange word came out of his mouth, he felt a strong tug at his navel and instinctively knew he would end up far away from his room.

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A/N: Please don't kill the author for leaving her first cliffy! Ducks in a corner to avoid books thrown by protesting readers. How'd you find that chapter? Good? Bad? Did I give enough explanation for some of your questions? I know there are still plenty that haven't been answered but we'll get there. Soon.

Now all I need are your REVIEWS! I hunger for them and am motivated by them, so pleasey please press that tantalizing purple button below the screen. Points a dozen neon arrows at the button. The more reviews you send, the quicker you're gonna find out what happens next. (oops! i did it again! I'm sorry... I'll sit quietly on my chair and wait patiently for your reviews.)

Til' next post....

dan4eva

## Chapter 8 In The Room

Tobias landed roughly on all fours in a dimly lit room covered with a plush green carpet his body was currently lying on. Pulling himself to his feet, he came face to face with a large window that reached all the way up to the ceiling; bathing the room with the soft light of the moon. The window had a magnificent view of a lake and a vast forest. At that moment he thought that the ring portkey had taken him to Hogwarts; but then none of the mountains that surrounded the famous school could be seen in the background.

Looking down on his finger that still held the silver ring, he saw that the other runes had returned and were once again flowing through its smooth surface. Thinking that this was yet other trap orchestrated by Voldemort to lure him, he slowly pulled out his wand; standing at a ready in case Death Eaters came in to the room.

Then another thought struck him.

What if this was Dumbledore's doing? He had already proven to him that he was capable of doings in subterfuge to gain contrver him. So it wouldn't be much of a challenge for the old man to make him believe the witch was working against him; thus making him, Harry, believe her!

Thinking back to it now, allowing that small amount of trust to a complete stranger was completely stupid, not to mention risky! He didn't even know who the damned witch worked for. For all he knew she could be working for Voldemort or Dumbledore. Or worse, both of them!

Thoroughly confused and infuriated about how his life was being played, he decided to have a walk around to survey the room. It was a pretty large room with a four poster bed that seemed to be attached to one side of the wall, was lifted several feet above the ground and there was a built in step ladder at its base. Burning with dying embers, a fireplace adorned the centre of one particular wall. A large comfortable dark blue couch was placed just in front of the fire.

A desk and bookshelves completed the room. There was no wardrobe but there were two doors directly opposite him and

another one on his left. He guessed that one of them led to the hall outside.

Wand raised, he made a move towards the door directly before him. Turning the knob, he found himself staring at a handsome looking bathroom. The floor in the middle sank downwards and acted more of a mini pool than a bathtub. The other door beside the bathroom turned out to be a gigantic walk-in closet. (It was so large that it could fit another large sized bed.)

So that meant that the last unopened door was the one that led out of the room. But when he got there to open it, he found it to be locked. He pushed and shoved at the door but it remained unmoving. Hoping that this was a wizard's house, he pointed his wand at the door and shouted, "Alohamora!"

The door glowed but still remained unopened. Tobias cursed at his non existent luck and gave the door a sharp kick in annoyance. The harsh kick did nothing to open the door but make his toe throb horribly, making him curse even louder.

Flopping on the large bed in frustration, Tobias gathered all his thoughts on how to best handle his current situation. He had just been portkeyed to an unknown location, locked inside a bedroom with no means of getting out and worse of all; he had no idea who was waiting for him beyond the walls of the damned room.

Eyeing the room more carefully as he laid on the large bed, he realized that the room wasn't all that bad considering it was currently acting as his holding place. There was just something comforting about the large room he couldn't pin point. It was as if the large window in the room was opening him to the stars above, calming him.

Struggling to fight the drowsiness he was now feeling laying down on the soft bed, Tobias ran in his head the various spells he had read about in the books he had bought a couple of days ago. But no so sooner had he picked a spell to use on whoever it was that got him here, the tug of sleep won over and he found himself snuggling into the thick grey blanket.

Unknown to him, the occupants of the old manor were busy preparing for what was about to take place in a couple of hours.

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In what seemed like an eternity but in reality was only a few hours, the sun rose and Tobias found himself waking to the sounds of someone trying to open the door.

Bolting out of the large bed, he re-tightened his hold on his wand which had slackened while he had slept. Walking towards the door he knew led outside, he positioned himself to be able to attack whoever it was opening the door.

The door glowed and Tobias saw the handle turn, bracing himself from an attack from his captives, he stood at a ready. He caught a glimpse of wavy black hair before sending a stunner towards the person. However the spell didn't do what was intended of it, instead of stunning the person that had just come in, the spell rebounded, hitting a surprised Tobias in the chest.

Tobias was flung all the way to the foot of the bed as his spell rebounded. Landing in a heap and hitting his head on the ladder, he heard someone laughing softly by the still open door.

"Harry... Harry..." taunted the voice that sounded familiar to him. "When are you ever gonna learn to not always run head long into trouble? They can be really damaging to the health."

Tobias staggered as he tried to get to his feet. His head was pounding like it had never before. It seemed like his head received much more than a good thrashing against the bed. Squinting his eyes from the bright light that was now so intense to his throbbing head, he sought to make out the figure of the person who was now walking around the room.

"Looks like you hit your head pretty badly there," said the person, walking towards his limp form on the floor.

A gentle hand went up to examine his head. After a while, the person moved away only to return with a vial in hand.

"Here drink this. It'll clear your head," she said gently pushing the vial into his palm.

However Tobias refused to even take it. He wouldn't make it easy for these people to control him. So what if his head felt like it was about to split into two, it's not as if he'd never experienced it before.

The person saw the reluctance and determination in his pain glazed eyes and pushed the vial more firmly into his hands.

"I'm not here to poison you Harry. You're in pain, the least I can do for now is ease it," said the voice that was so familiar yet because of his headache, he couldn't quite place it.

"Why do you keep calling me Harry?" asked Tobias through gritted teeth, hoping to salvage his disguise.

"Well that is your name, isn't it? Tobias Night has been dead for years. And no spell can bring back the dead. You of all people should know that." the voice chuckled

"Lin?" gasped Tobias, trying once more to get to his feet.

"Whoopee! You finally remembered my name," cheered Lin, helping Tobias to the bed. "You got me worried there for a sec."

Tobias couldn't help but cringe from the loud voice that was quite painful to his sore head and sat gingerly on the comfortable bed.

"Sorry about that," said Lin seeing his reaction to her childish outburst. "Here. Drink the potion. It'll help and I swear it hasn't been tampered with."

This time, Tobias did take the potion from the young witch's hand but nonetheless he was still reluctant to put even the slightest of trust on the witch.

The potion, like all the other potions he had downed over the years, was as sweet tasting as a powdered Bicorn horn, which meant it made him gag.

"You didn't expect pumpkin juice now, did you?" laughed Lin at his disgusted expression.

Once the potion had been ingested, Tobias' vision began to clear and the pained was dumb slightly. And he now had a good view of the hooded witch he had meet not that long ago.

Lin had long dark hair that ended in an elegant wave. It wasn't as dark as his, more of a dark brown colour. She also had the smokiest grey eyes he had ever seen that went well with her lightly tanned complexion. Barely noticeable due to the robe she was wearing was a long golden chain that hung around her neck. Right now she was looking at him with an unreadable expression on her face.

Feeling uncomfortable under her hard gaze, Tobias turned to look away. After some time he felt her leave the bed and walk towards the door.

"I left your breakfast on the desk. I'll be back later to talk to you." said Lin before leaving to close the door once more.

"Wait!" cried Tobias before the door closed shut. Lin reappeared through the gap and looked questioningly at him.

"You're just gonna leave me locked up here?" asked Tobias. Lin surveyed his form for a moment before returning back into the room though this time she didn't make a move to get closer to him. She closed the door and leaned casually on it, her arms crossed on her chest.

"And that's a problem because?" she inquired sarcastically, looking directly at him.

"You told me to come here, so I expect some answers." said Tobias indignantly.

"I never said that." replied Lin her face blank once more.

Tobias stuttered for words before replying again. "Well, maybe not directly. But you did tell me to use the ring. And now I'm here!"

Lin just stared at him; watching his every move. Tobias was about to ask her again when she spoke slowly, unlike he'd ever heard before.

"Why did you use the ring?" she said softly, emphasising every word.

Tobias stared at her in bewilderment. "You told me —," he started but was interrupted before he could say more.

"I know what I said Harry. But I want to know why you wanted to use the ring." she said casually, still watching him carefully.

Tobias blinked. The way she was watching him as if she was waiting for him to do something was unnerving his already uneasy disposition. "You said that when I felt that the Order had overstepped its boundaries about me, I should use the ring." Tobias pointed out.

"Yes." Lin was eyeing him carefully. "And you felt that they had indeed overstepped those boundaries?"

By now Tobias was utterly confused. He didn't know what she wanted to hear from him or why she was so interested for that matter. "Why do you want to know?" barked Tobias, temper flaring. "Isn't me being here what you wanted in the first place?"

Lin considered his rising irritation at the situation before slowly making a move towards him for the first time since she had re-entered the room. She stood before the bedpost, gripping the cool redwood.

"Yes." she stated simply, cocking her head to the side that it was leaning on the post.

"Why?" pressed Tobias. "What do you want from me?"

"That's not really the right question now that I've come to think of it." she said flippantly.

"Then tell me!" snapped Tobias.

"And where's the fun in that?" asked Lin in mock astonishment.

Something inside of Tobias wanted to lunge at the maddening witch and give her a firm shake but remembering the last time he tried to wrestle out an answer from her, kept those instincts at bay. Instead he contented himself with glaring furiously at her; hazel eyes darkening, bordering to obsidian.



"What makes you think I am avoiding the Order? For all you know I could just be playing you." sneered Tobias, trying another tack.

"There is that," agreed the witch. "But you and I both know that that's not the case, Harry. Why else would you willingly follow a stranger's advice to evade said Order? Moreover, I know what brought you here. I know why you're feeling the way you're feeling now. I know you don't understand why you're suddenly like this. I know you're scared. And I know you're dying to figure them all out."

She smiled cryptically at him, taunting him further. "But I don't think I'm the right person to tell you all that." She moved away from the bed and walked back to the door.

However, before she could even make a step forward, Tobias had jumped out of the bed and grabbed her by the arm. Turning her around to face him, he saw that she was staring at him with the same piercing expression he knew she had worn that day in the Leaky Cauldron.

"Tell me!" he shouted, shaking her arms. He could feel what ever it was that was within him trying to come out and it was making his head throb once more. Then he felt something hot pass through his body and he released her immediately with a jolt.

Staring wildly at her, Tobias staggered backwards clutching his head. Lin watched as the supposed saviour of the wizarding world swayed threateningly before her.

"What –?" he mumbled at her, groping for the bedpost to prevent himself from collapsing on the floor due to the intense pain.

Lin just stood there watching as he struggled to stay on his feet. Then without warning she left him with a swish of her cloak. Sealing the door shut once more.

Tobias felt as if someone was trying to compress his head into a tiny ball. Black spots soon appeared in his vision and he greatly welcomed the darkness that would rescue him from the pain.

A/N: Hopefully the next chapter will be up soon... for the meantime, please read and review...

'Til next post

dan4eva

## Chapter 9

### : The Mask Falls

"Oh, my child," he felt the softest of hands brush his forehead. "So long have I dreamt of this moment; to have you in my arms once more."

"Be strong, my son, it'll soon be over." The voice was as sweet as the summer's sweetest honeysuckle and as warm as the morning sun; it was unlike anything he had ever heard before.

"Mummy's here and I'll never leave you again, I promise. You'll never be alone again. You're home now. You're safe. Now rest, for tomorrow springs a new dawn." Something soft and warm touched the top of his head, pulling him deeper into the lull of blissful slumber.

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Harry woke up once again to find himself within the tangled folds of a warm bed. Slowly pushing himself to a sitting position, he looked around to find that he was still in the same room he had appeared in earlier. Feeling a bit light-headed, he had no recollection whatsoever of ever having gone back to bed. Try as he might, he couldn't remember what had occurred after his second encounter with the mysterious Lin. The last thing he could remember was hitting the floor for the second time that day and strong arms lifting him up, after that it was all blank.

Looking out of the window, he saw that it was already late into the evening for the sky was now a dazzling display of orange and purple. He couldn't believe that he'd been out cold for most of the day. What had happened to him? One second he was shouting at Lin, the next – nothing. It was as if someone had removed his memories. That sent shivers down his spine.

He couldn't lie to himself anymore; something was going on and it was scaring him that he couldn't see where it was all heading. Deciding that he could worry better without the sudden pressure he was feeling in his bladder, he threw his legs to the side of the bed and headed for the connecting loo. But as soon as he was up, his vision swam out of focus and his legs buckled. He had to hold onto

the sheets to prevent himself from making further contact with the floor.

Once he was sure his legs would support his weight, he staggered to his destination. His business done, he felt a weird sense of déjà vu creep up on him as he stood by the bathroom door, looking at the room. This was his second night locked up in the room and he knew that something had happened; he could feel it in his very bones.

Making his way past the large four poster bed, he went to stand before the room's sole window. He watched the slow transition of colours that marked the end of the day and the emergence of night. There were times when things got too much; he'd wish his life would just be as smooth as the shift from light to night, exciting but expected.

Then his reflection caught his attention. What he saw made his jaw drop in bewilderment, for instead of the splitting-image-of-James look he'd come to identify with his entire life, he was staring at a complete stranger.

His hair was much longer than he'd last seen it before leaving his uncle's house. Though it was still black in colour, he could now see a couple of red highlights whenever his hair touched the light. It appeared to be reddish-black. His face, however, was a different story altogether. Nothing of James Potter could be found in it any more, the nose, the lips, and eye brows – all gone. The only thing familiar about his new appearance were his emerald green eyes and the lightning bolt scar on his forehead that made him a marked man.

If it weren't for those, he'd have thought he was looking at a younger version of Hogwarts' most infamous professor. He ran his hand through his face to find it more angular and sharp, his brows thinner and his lips fuller. His nose thankfully weren't as aquiline as Snape's.

It was then that dread finally dropped itself in his stomach. What was happening to him? Why was he changing like this? Something was clawing away inside him and it made him double over in agony. The pain soon left as quickly as it had come but it left him more scared than ever.

He heard someone trying to open the door and he turned so fast to see who had come that he cricked his neck. "Ah, Harry, you're up," said Lin, entering the room and lowering her burden on the desk.

"For your pain," she said as she watched him stare at the vial she had brought in. "Are you feeling better?" She made a move towards him but regretted it immediately when Harry made two steps away from her. Seeing the distress in his eyes, she realized immediately what brought on the defensive reactions.

"I guess you found out," she said more to herself but knew that he was listening to every word she said. Lin fumbled with the vials she had brought to give him ample time to get his thoughts sorted out.

"When was the last time you removed your Glamour?" she asked after awhile. The question baffled Harry. Why would he remove his Glamour? That was ridiculous. He voiced these thoughts to her.

"Well that explains it then," she said looking at him.

"Explains what?" asked Harry, keeping his distance.

"Your reaction to the change," explained Lin, preparing herself for the outburst that was about to come. And she wasn't disappointed.

"My reaction to the change?" said Harry incredulously. "Anyone would get scared when all of a sudden the image they've come to associate with their entire life suddenly changes without them knowing it!"

"Had you allowed your body to relax after the magical strain you put it on by casting several short term Glamour charms over and over again for the past few days, this wouldn't have happened," countered Lin calmly, spreading her right hand to indicate his appearance.

"The change was never meant to happen at this pace. It was supposed to happen gradually so that it wouldn't cause a stir. But due to the constant Glamour concealing your real appearance, your body had no choice but to accelerate the process."

While Harry took all this in, Lin stood her ground and took her first real look at him. She had to laugh that his previous appearance

didn't fit at all his flaming temper. Blondes didn't really fit the description of a troubled teen with hidden dark agendas, now she'd come to think of it.

However, now that she was looking at how he really looked like, she couldn't help but feel a little intimidated. It was his eyes that held her; with his high cheek bones, they made his eyes more prominent and they look so much like his mother's. James Potter did no justice to those emerald orbs.

But it was his unusually calm voice that caught her attention. "I need to know what's happening to me, Lin," he said taking a small step forward.

Lin stared at him. She had not anticipated for him to make this move. Harry stared expectedly at her as she stood quietly in her place. This time it was her turn to look away from his green eyes.

Continuing his slow advance towards her, Harry continued, "Lin, something's happening to me. Why won't you tell me?"

"It's not that I don't want to tell you," replied Lin, watching his every move warily.

"Then tell me, Lin. Please," he said, looking straight at her, green eyes pleading.

It was the helplessness in his voice that unnerved her; how this person depended on her for his life. Angry and moody Harry she could deal with, but this was something she could never get use to seeing. It was just wrong and it made something in her that she thought she had lose forever come tumbling out. It made a different part of her feel alive once more.

Unconsciously lifting her hand to the chain that was within her robes, she smiled sadly to herself. Looking up, she saw that Harry was looking curiously at her.

Lin locked eyes with him for a moment before walking past him and standing before the large window, looking up as the stars slowly dusted the night sky. "You have got to know that not everyone is as they seem, Harry." she said seriously.

Harry, who had been watching her the whole time, now stood beside her overlooking the vast grounds that lay outside. The trees swayed slightly in the cool night breeze sending a couple of birds flying away. A squirrel scuttled off to one side, probably on its way home to a hollow in one of the trees. He looked up at his strange companion to find her looking serenely at the stars. It was then that she turned to look at him and he asked, "What do you mean not everyone is as they seem?"

"Precisely that," she replied. "A lot of things have been going on and we thought we'd never see the end of it. But now things are unravelling fast and we can't risk it anymore."

"Lin I don't —" started Harry before he was cut off by her who had now shifted her gaze back to the stars.

"It's not that I don't want to tell you what's happening, it's just that I can't. It's not up to me," she said softly.

"But, Lin, I really need to know. I can't fight what I can't see," Harry said with a little a bit of desperation in his voice.

"Who ever told you that you had to fight it? Things happen for a reason and you have to accept them."

"How do I accept something that I don't even understand?" rebutted Harry.

Silence followed that statement. Harry could hear Lin's slow, even breathing and his own erratic beating heart. How was he supposed to make sense of things if no one was explaining them to him?

"Fine," said Lin after awhile, turning to face him. "Fine, you want to know what's happening. Then I'll tell you what's happening. We're at war. A war, Harry, that's been raging on for as long as I can remember."

"With Voldemort?" asked Harry in deride once he'd registered what she'd said. "That's what all these charades are about?" He walked away from her to pace the room. "Everyone already knows I'm the one who's supposed to kill the bastard. I'm the bloody 'Chosen One', didn't you know that?"

"Yes, I know what they label you as. And no, not a war with Voldemort; you'd be extremely surprised to know what role he plays in this war. But we aren't fighting with him; who we're fighting with however is someone equally powerful," stated Lin, watching his every move.

"Who, his father? If not him then who else is there?" sneered Harry at Lin.

"You wouldn't believe me if I told you. Not now at least, not until they've told you all of it," said Lin firmly, her arms crossed.

Harry pounded his fist at the desk and shouted at her, "Damn it, Lin! How'd you expect me to accept whatever it is you want me to accept if you won't tell me about it? All my life, no one has ever come up to me to just inform me what the heck is happening. The Wizarding World treats me as a bloody deranged kid and the Order doesn't even think to tell me what they're doing."

"Why can't they just come up to me and say 'Hey, Harry, just want to let you know that tomorrow you're gonna get your arse killed.' Then when you came to me that day, I thought you were going to be different and that things were going to change. But I was wrong."

Lin took tentative steps towards him. "Things are different."

"How are they different? I've been stuck in this room for days, and every minute my head feels like it's about to split into two. I'm changing into something I'm not and no one has cared to come up to me and tell me why the heck I want to curse the living daylights out of everyone I see!"

The objects in the room were vibrating so hard during his rant that one of the potion vials Lin had brought in fell to the floor, staining the plush carpet with bluish-green liquid. Lin could literally feel the power radiating off him, causing his clothes and hair to flutter as if caught in a high wind, giving him an altogether sinister look.

Lin stood her ground until the energy lapse passed and when it did, Harry's shoulders sagged and he had to lean onto the desk for support.



"I like what I just felt, Lin. It was so familiar, so liberating, like something out of this world. I want to embrace it but I'm scared," said Harry in a small voice. He felt a hand touch his shoulder.

"I know how it feels. And it's not turning you into something other than what you were supposed to be in the first place," he heard her say in what some would call a comforting voice.

"And what am I supposed to be, a Dark Lord?" he laughed mirthlessly.

A pregnant pause followed that pronouncement and the hand on his shoulder tightened. The uneasiness in the air made him turn to look at the only person in the room. Lin wore an unreadable expression on her face which filled his stomach with dread once more.

"I'm turning into a Dark Lord?" he asked tentatively, brows burrowed in disbelief but she betrayed no emotion on her face.

Releasing her hold on him she said in a soft voice, "Not everything is as it seems and we have to be what we have to be. But remember that whatever you might feel later on, try to understand that what they did, they did for a reason."

"Who are they? Who do you keep talking about?" demanded Harry in confusion. But before Lin could answer him, the door to the room opened revealing a tall man in black robes.

"Father." said Lin in greeting to the man by the door. Harry swerved around to see who had entered and who he saw made his eyes budge out of their sockets.

A/N:

You know the drill guys... click that pretty little purple button at the bottom of the page and you've made one author extremely giddy in excitement...

dan4eva

## Chapter 10: Of Gatherings and Point of Views

Though the Ministry had now confirmed that the Dark Lord had indeed returned to life and was now wreaking havoc everywhere, it still could not escape the inevitable slander a majority of the public were throwing at them. They had never been more united in their cause when they ousted former Minister of Magic, Cornelius Fudge, after his dismal attempts to reassure the Wizarding Public that he was doing all he could under the circumstances. So weeks later, Rufus Scrimgeour, the former Head of the Auror Office, was elected as his successor with the hopes that he would be able to lead them better through these dark dangerous times.

Other than the public, the press were also lashing out about the government's lack of movement regarding the events that were rapidly unfolding around them. Since Fudge had kept such a tight hold on all print media during the previous year, only allowing them to print news that showed the Ministry in a good light, the press were now going all out to publish all the scoops they had accumulated over the last year. And because of this, the Ministry was rarely in the papers' good side. Some even went to comment that "the Ministry has turned into a bunch of blind politicians leading the blind using a threadbare wand!" or "Flobberworms could be more aggressive than the Ministry when they think someone is about to step on them!"

It was ironic how all of last year, all the papers did was agree with the Ministry and slip in Harry's or Dumbledore's name in as a standing joke. Yet now things were turned in over their heads with Harry and Dumbledore getting all the attention they should have gotten the previous year. The Prophet was even sprouting out that they believed them all along but were unable to tell the public because to Fudge's firm grip.

The whole of the Wizarding World may now know of the truth behind all of the lies that were forged by those who refused to acknowledge the truth, but it didn't make them any safer than when the truth was distorted. In fact it just made them more susceptible to harm, the way the Ministry was dealing with things; witches and wizards here and there taking advantage of the people's renewed fear of the Dark. Just the last week, Aurors had apprehended a couple of con wizards trying to sell off a dozen fake talismans that were supposed to detect Dementors. They were of course bogus, but it hadn't stopped the paranoid public from purchasing them.

However there is a certain group of people, who were trying to fight the Dark outside the weakening hold of the Ministry. A band of people, who for the past few days have done nothing but try to make sure the Ministry didn't intervene with their search. Now, this group of advocates were congregating in the damp and dark kitchen of No. 12 Grimmauld Place. It would be the first time the members of the Order would set foot inside the Headquarters ever since they'd been sent out to track down Harry Potter. Almost all had arrived for the meeting with the exception of some, who were either too far away or caught up in a mission to attend.

The Order was seated around a long wooden table; piles of parchments were scattered before them and the air wrought filled with tension. "Headmaster, we've received word from the conductor of the Knight Bus that Harry had indeed boarded the bus going to London on the morning of the 31st," reported Bill Weasley towards the head of the table where the Headmaster was situated, looking weary yet determined..

"We've looked everywhere in London, Bill, he wasn't there," countered Tonks, who today was supporting a short bob that framed her petite face.

"Yes, Bill, Alastor and I had even talked with the barman at the Leaky Cauldron and he hasn't seen anything out of the ordinary," said Remus sounding grim at their lack of success.

"Harry could have disguised himself," argued Charlie on behalf of his brother.

"The Ministry would have had their hands all over him if he did perform underage magic," stated Mr. Weasley. "And even if Harry had indeed disguised himself, Alastor here would have detected it." He nodded at the ex-Auror who nodded back in agreement.

"Exactly," said Kingsley Shacklebolt "Also, Scrimgeour is already getting scrutinized only after weeks in office because he's not doing anything to find Potter. I believe that if he finds anything significant about Potter's disappearance, he will act on it and no longer heed our advice."

"But, Albus, surely there must be something we could do," cried Mrs. Weasley.

"I understand how you feel, Molly," said Dumbledore calmly. "But this must be kept tightly under wraps. If word ever gets out in the public that their saviour is missing, mass panic would occur. We need to keep the public the way they are now, if we plan to proceed with our plans."

"Dear, another riot won't do us or finding Harry any good," said Mr. Weasley, taking hold of his wife's clammy hands.

"Arthur, he's been missing for days. For all we know he could be in the hands of You-Know-Who. He must feel we've abandoned him somehow," uttered Mrs. Weasley in near hysteria.

"Calm yourself, Molly," intoned Dumbledore. "We know for a fact that Voldemort –" everyone in the room flinched, "is in the same situation as us. He does not know where Harry is as well and he's trying everything in his power to get his hands on the boy before us. The Ministry is the least of our concerns."

"Where else could he be?" wondered Tonks. "We've contacted everyone he knows and none of them has seen him. It's not like he has any place else to go."

"Perhaps it is best if we just let the lad be," said Moody for the first time. A dozen pairs of eyes stared incredulously at him.

"Have you really gone mad, Mad-Eye?" said Molly angrily.

"Perhaps, perhaps not," replied Moody, watching the reactions of the others. "But the boy would not have run away without a reason. And if it's taking a number of qualified witches and wizards to find a mere sixteen year old boy, there's got to be a reason why. Maybe all he needs is time."

Albus had his chin resting on his intertwined fingers and stared thoughtfully ahead.

"Albus, this is completely out of our hands," said his Deputy Headmistress, McGonagall, who was seated beside him. "Severus has already informed us that He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named does not

have Harry. So that means the boy is not in any imminent danger; he just doesn't want to be found

"But why doesn't he want to be found?" demanded Mrs. Weasley while her husband vainly tried to reign her in. "I understand why he'd want to run from the Muggles, but why us?"

Every single person present in the room turned to look at the direction of Dumbledore for answers. Sighing heavily, Dumbledore went against his better judgement, "We'll continue our search."

Mrs. Weasley smiled smugly at Moody and McGonagall while the other two just nodded and accepted the decision.

"The Dark may not have Harry, but it is still our priority to find him. However, I do realize that we'll get nothing done if we pull everyone out to do the same thing. So I must ask some of you to go back to your previous missions before the search began," said Dumbledore, watching members from his vantage point.

Remus hadn't been paying much attention to the conversation since he first spoke and now turned his attention to the Headmaster, his face unreadable.

"Albus, I must disagree," he said, looking at the Dumbledore straight in the eye. The others turned to look at Dumbledore for his reaction. However Dumbledore only eyed Remus with an amused look on his ancient face, prompting him to continue.

"I do believe that Harry only needs time to reassess his thoughts and emotions. We don't need to chase after him like some sort of fugitive. Perhaps we're only pushing him away by preventing him this small amount of time to be alone. The boy has been through a lot this past few months, a lot has been placed on his shoulder and... and S-Sirius' passing hasn't been easy," said Remus, his eyes filled with sadness and regret.

The whole room was silent for a moment, remembering their fallen comrade and the battles they had fought. They knew how hard it was to pull yourself up after a beating and to imagine a boy doing the same thing that most of them struggle with on a daily basis was intangible.

Dumbledore had a profound look on his face, as if he was battling with himself on what to do with the situation. After awhile he turned his attention back to the room at large. "I know of the loss you all feel, but this is not the time to let our emotions do the talking. Voldemort is out there trying to get his hands on the boy and if we don't act soon, Harry may never get the time he deserves."

"But, Albus, Harry is capable of protecting himself. If he was able to elude both the Order and the Dark Lord this long, he must be doing something right. Can't we just grant him this time to venture off on his own?" argued Remus looking determined.

"Remus," Dumbledore said firmly, "I know you are hurting; Sirius was taken from us too early. But you are not to blame for his death, so do not try to shield Harry by allowing him to run away from his problems."

"And I do believe that the boy is capable; he has proven himself to me time and time again. But this is not a question of his ability. He needs to be protected! You are not helping him by allowing him to do what he wants!" A gleam of something hard shone briefly in the Headmaster's blue eyes. Remus doubted that anyone other than him saw it and wondered why the Headmaster refused to see reason this time around. But seeing the older wizard riled up at him, he lowered his gaze, asking himself what James or Sirius would have done if faced with this kind of situation.

A minute of silence followed Dumbledore's pronouncement and no one else tried to change the wizard's decision.

"If that is all that need be said about Harry, I want to make clear again that Harry must be found at all cost without the Ministry's involvement. Now I suggest we move on to the next agenda," Dumbledore stated, eyeing Kingsley Shacklebolt to be more specific.

Kingsley cleared his throat and reported his findings in the Ministry. "As we all know, Fudge decided to remain in the Ministry after he stepped down and took up Shiloh Markson's post as Head of the Department of Mystery."

A collected murmur of disagreement ensued from this statement. Kingsley smiled knowingly at the reaction and continued, "Well, ever since he came to the DOM, he's been obsessed with figuring out

something he claimed to have noticed during the attack at the DOM this past June. He won't clarify what it is but Scrimgeour has recently granted him access to the Old Files."

An assortment of responses came from the Order. Some of them had a befuddled look upon them while others looked interested.

"Aren't the Old Files a collection of accounts by those who survived the Grindenwald era?" asked Tonks. At this, everyone turned their attention once again back to the Headmaster since he was the only one in the room who was present during that time.

"Yes. They are eye witness accounts of those who survived and fought during the Grindenwald era. Most of them are still alive if not a bit knocked on the head but the majority of them have died through the years," answered Dumbledore, a look of worry on his face.

"I want you to keep a close eye on Fudge and report to me any significant things that occur down there," he told Kingsley who nodded at the Order. Dumbledore continued to have a troubled look on his face and watched as his Order discussed other agendas amongst themselves. A quick survey around the room found him catching the eye of one of the Order members in the room and saw that that person was mirroring his emotions. He nodded stiffly at the direction of the person and went back to discussing Order business.

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Across the room, on the banister of the former House of Black, a group of teenagers were gathered together. If someone were to come through the front door, they'd wonder what four teenagers were doing leaning over the third floor banister, flesh coloured strings trailing from their ears.

"It's a major meeting their having down there," said Fred, readjusting the earpiece to his Extendable Ear. "I saw almost every member in the Inner group come in today."

"But did anyone see Snape?" asked Ron. "Isn't he one of the Inner members as well? Don't tell me Dumbledore has seen him for who he truly is." There was a hopeful tone in his voice that didn't go unnoticed by Hermione.

"Ronald Weasley, what a thing to say!" she exclaimed, removing her end of the Extendable Ear.

"What?" said Ron incredulously.

"He could be risking his life. We all know what he does for the Order," said Hermione.

"How do we know he's not working as a double agent?" Ron fought back.

"And how many times have we doubted his actions only to be proven wrong in the end?" came Hermione's sharp reply.

"Why did he allow us to get caught by Umbridge last June then if he's on our side?" countered Ron, removing his Extendable Ear as well. Fred and George stared as the two fought it out and watched them as though they were following a volley.

"D'you know something, Gred?" asked Fred, turning to his twin.

"I think I do, Forge." said George coyly. "We're witnessing the fascinating human phenomenon of –"

"a lovers' quarrel." the twins chorused, clapping their hands high in the air.

Ron's ears were now turning red while Hermione's cheeks were flushed a brilliant pink. She was about to open her mouth to retort to whatever it was that Ron said when she was interrupted by the twins, their hands clasped firmly on her mouth. She mumbled and stared angrily at the Weasley twins.

"Though it pains us to interrupt your invigorating verbal flirtation, we need to remind you that we're not supposed to be here. So if you plan to get caught by mum, just tell us and we'll levitate you right in front of the door," said George sarcastically.

Ron turned a violent shade of red and orange and turned mortified away from Hermione's line of sight. Hermione, however, seemed unfazed by the twins' ribbing and used her free hands to remove the twins' hands from her mouth.



"Oh shut up, George," said Hermione after she'd regain the use of her mouth. Placing the fleshy string back into her ear, she listened back to the meeting going on two floors down. After awhile the three Weasley boys rejoined her in their snooping.

"Shush, its starting," said Ron.

"Oh, like we couldn't hear, little brother," said Fred, looking at his brother disbelievingly. A sharp look from Hermione had shut whatever it was that George had planned to say about Ron.

"What are you doing?" someone said pointedly from behind them causing them to jump in surprise.

"Ginny!" they all exclaimed as they saw who it was that had spoken.

"Who else were you expecting?" asked Ginny walking towards them.

"No one," said Ron quickly the Extendable Ears from sight. "You just gave as a scare."

"Why is it that I don't believe you, Ron?" commented Ginny with her brow raised, arms crossed tightly across her chest.

"Oh fine! There's an Order meeting going on and we wanted to know whether they've found Harry," said Ron, giving in to his sister. After years of living in the same house as their sister, all the Weasley brothers had learnt the hard way that, like their mother, they could keep nothing from the inquisitive eyes of their, no longer little, sister.

The mention of Harry and the Order meeting had interested Ginny and she moved to grab all of her brothers' earpieces that Ron failed to keep from her, which caused them to shout in indignation.

"Quiet, mum will hear us," she said, stuffing an earpiece to her right ear while she held on to the others.

"I swear mum and dad go easy on her because she's the youngest and the only girl," mumbled Fred unhappily under his breath. George and Ron both agreed. Hermione just quietly shook her head at how they thought of their sister, though she too wasn't very pleased with how Ginny was bossing them around this summer. In

fact ever since she'd arrived at the Headquarters', she'd rarely seen the teenage girl and when she did, she would either be bossy or doing something none of them had yet to figure out. Ginny's unusual behaviour was slightly worrying the older girl but since her brothers said that this was just how their sister acted when in a bad mood, she didn't put much thought into it. But as the days of Harry's disappearance got longer, Hermione had noticed that the youngest Weasley child was disappearing at longer intervals.

"So, what are they talking about?" asked Ron.

Ginny held up a finger to silence them as her brows furrowed as if what she was hearing wasn't at all good. At last Ginny removed the earpiece and pulled the whole thing away from the door, a slight disgusted look upon her face.

"What'd you do that for?" complained the twins, seeing their invention being stowed away by their sister.

"The meeting's over," stated Ginny, moving away from the railing.

"Are you gonna tell us what happened?" asked Ron.

"No. You weren't supposed to be listening in on it anyway," replied Ginny.

"You weren't supposed to listen in on them either," argued Ron.

"Come now, Ginny, it's not fair. We want to know where Harry is. You're not the only one devastated by his disappearance," said Hermione in a tone she often used to bully Harry and Ron into studying with her.

Ginny stopped at her tracks and turned to look at her brothers and friend, an aggravated look upon her face. "You are such a hypocrite, Hermione Granger!" snapped Ginny causing the older girl to recoil backwards in surprise.

"What are you on about, Ginny?" wondered Ron, coming to his friend's defence.

"Oh she knows what I'm talking about. Don't you, Hermione?" said Ginny maintaining her ground but eyeing the older Gryffindor closely.

Hermione was about to reply but was stopped as Ginny continued to rant at her.

"Don't you feel bad at all with what you've done?"

"I only did what I thought was best," said Hermione weakly for her defence. Ron and the twins had confused looks on their faces, not following what the argument was about.

"Oh, so penning a letter that basically goes to say that you're blaming him for the death of his godfather was the best you could think of?" spat Ginny.

"You wrote what?" blurted Ron turning to his friend. Hermione paled wonderfully, ashamed of herself.

"So don't you pretend you care whether Harry's missing or not, coz it was probably your fault he ran. You pushed him away when he needed you the most!" Ginny walked away leaving three open mouthed Weasleys at her wake and a weeping Hermione.

A/N: okay, that's it for me for now. Don't forget to vote for the story you want me to continue...

'til next post...

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## Chapter 11 A Lesson in History

"SNAPE!" Harry blurted out in shock, unable to believe what he was seeing. What was he doing here? What did he want from him?

"I expected just as much from you, Mr. Potter," replied Snape calmly, his voice lacking its usual sneer and insult. All of them stood stock, waiting for the initial shock to wear off. Snape took this time to take a real good look at the young man before him.

"What are you doing here?" barked Harry once he'd rid of his shock, looking back between his professor and Lin.

"Even though we are outside the castle grounds, I still expect the same respect you give your professor when within the castle, Mr. Potter," commented Snape, still standing stoically by the doorway.

Harry found Snape's cool and collected attitude unnerving; never had the Head of Slytherin House been this calm towards him even for a minute, not even when he was giving out the ghastliest of punishments was he this calm.

"Dream on!" came Harry's mulish reply. Snape raised a thin brow at the boy's rebelliousness, but he knew that that was soon going to change.

"Harry," said Lin, catching the green-eyed boy's attention. "You wanted to know what's going on, and for that you need to know the truth."

"The truth about what?" asked Harry, turning his gaze away from the tall man by the door.

"Your past," said Lin simply.

"My past? What's my past got to do with any of this?"

"Everything, Harry, everything," said the voice he never would have expected in his whole life to say his first name in such soft manner. Harry whipped around to see that Snape had left the door and was now sitting comfortably in the dark blue couch, his gaze placed steadily right on him.

They stared at each other for a while but the other man wasn't eyeing him maliciously as he'd come to do for as long as Harry could remember. There was something in the man's eyes that he could not fathom and it made him feel as though he was in the presence of a totally different man, unlike the professor he'd come to know and hate. The staring soon became unbearable for Harry and he instead turned to look at the person he'd hope would give him the answers he so desperately required.

"What is going on here?" demanded Harry, "First you told me you're at war with someone other than Voldemort and now you're telling me this man here is your father? I suggest you start telling me what the heck is happening." Harry stared hard at Lin.

"I believe you have harassed Selene long enough, Harry," said Snape, his tone slightly firmer than before.

The name made him flinch and that something in him rose to the surface once more, threatening to overwhelm him and everyone else in the room. He fought to rein it in but the longer he tried to suppress it, the stronger it got.

"Do not fight it," he heard Snape's deep voice from somewhere in the room. His vision was starting to cloud and he was losing his footing. Stumbling backwards, he grabbed hold of the bedpost and tried to regain control of his body once more. He heard someone trying to tell him not to fight it again but he didn't want to listen; he did not want to lose control again.

The internal struggle for dominance was taking a toll to his barely recovering body. It was pushing at his every bone at a cellular level, demanding release from the cage it had been forcefully placed in for years. His head felt fit to burst, his hands shook while his legs started to lose their feeling. It was getting too powerful for him to contain.

Then after awhile, miraculously, the feeling subsided and his vision cleared. He saw that Snape was crouching before him; their faces were so close to each other that Harry could make out the kink in the professor's nose.

"Get off me," exclaimed Harry, scuttling away from his dark haired professor. Snape, who had his wand out, got up from the floor and

moved back to where he was seated earlier, something akin to sadness flickering in his obsidian orbs.

No, that can't be, thought Harry doubtfully, Snape doesn't care for anything. Why would he be saddened by this? No. My eyes must be playing tricks on me.

"You shouldn't have fought it. Sooner or later it would get too powerful for you," stated Snape, his face once again a mask of indifference. Now this was the Snape Harry knew and loathed.

"It would take a million Imperios before you can make me do what you want," growled Harry. This time it was the professor's turn to cringe at the tone of the boy's voice; this wasn't going as well as he'd hoped.

"Harry, I suggest you calm down and take a seat," said Snape calmly.

"Not before you tell me what's going on," said Harry.

"You will know what's going on. But please take a seat." Snape gestured at the large poster bed. There was a weariness in the Potion Master's voice that Harry had never heard before.

Going against his instincts, Harry sat on the bed, making it sag downwards. Keeping a wary eye at the two people he presently didn't trust, Harry waited for either of them to speak first.

Luckily he didn't have to wait long for it was Lin who decided to speak first. Situated between teacher and pupil, she spoke slowly.

"We hope you wouldn't interrupt us as we tell you the truth. It's complicated enough as it is." She eyed Harry, waiting for a confirmation.

Harry nodded stiffly and was expecting for her to continue but unfortunately it was Snape who spoke next. "What do you know of the Wizarding World's history apart from the numerous goblin rebellions?" he asked.

Harry looked disbelievingly at the man but answered his inquiry nonetheless with a shake of the head.

"Not surprising since witches and wizards rarely talk about their history. Not that they actually remember any of it," said Snape.

Harry was about to open his mouth when a raised hand from Snape silenced him, "No questions, not now." Harry looked darkly at him but held his tongue; his desire for information overriding his desire to argue with his teacher.

Snape took up a more comfortable position in the couch and began his sordid tale.

"Prior to the time of the Founders, even longer than Merlin's time of Magyck, the various races of magical beings co-existed harmoniously under the ruling of Kings and Queens. It was a time when witches and wizards mingled with their fellow magical beings like the High Elves, Vampyres, Warlocks and Dwarves. Hard to imagine there ever was such a time when you look at how the Ministry treats them now. Vampyres are now practically considered dark creatures and most of the dwarfs have been driven so far down that people hardly know of their existence."

Snape stopped for awhile to see how Harry was taking all of it so far; nothing much had been said yet, but he was soon going to get to the part that had changed their lives forever.

Harry had no idea were this tale was going at but one look at Lin told him that he was not to interrupt.

"Now, each one of these magical beings had their own very special talents, magical abilities that only they could control. It is power beyond imagination the Magyck certain of these beings held and protected with their life. But at one point in time certain members of this magical community started fearing and wondering why their abilities were not equal with those of their fellows. In other words, a power revolt was in the making. At first it was a minor problem that was solved by having one representative sit in the Royal Court as an acting king for his or her race. It was decided that each king would rule over all magical beings in periods of time. When their rule was over, they'd step down allowing the next king to have a chance to rule over the people. It was an effective system that allowed the many magical races to have their say and ease their power insurgence. The cycle of ruling lasted for many peaceful centuries

where many rules were evoked to ensure the equality among the people even with the varying degrees of ability."

"But the seed of revolution had been sowed and it only took a man, a wizard of greed to be precise, a few years to break the peace that prevented the seed from growing. He formed an underground operation that consisted of power hungry witches and wizards just like him. They performed in secret, luring those who feared the power certain beings possessed. Their primary goal was to harness that intangible power for their own. For them it was their way of making themselves equal to those of higher abilities."

"So on a night very much like this, they attacked, slaying many Vampyres, Elves, Warlocks, you name it, they killed them. The massacre was such an unexpected incident that it shook the very foundation in which their system was created. They had never expected their friends, neighbours and even distant relatives to barge into their homes and kill anyone they saw possess power greater than them."

"If you didn't know any better, you'd think that the Vampyres, High Elves and Warlocks, being the most powerful beings ever known to have existed would fight back against this insurgency in their world; to avenge those who have lost their lives to those who hungered for more. But they could not do it, they all grew up with these people, they were somehow one extended family and they could not bear to use their abilities to mortally wound them. So instead, the Kings of the Royal Court and the Shadow Council cast an ancient spell that would protect those who survived the carnage and created an alternate plane in which they could exist without those who seek to control their power. They called it the Clandestine Plane and those who sought refuge in it were known only as Clandestines."

"What happened to those who attacked them?" asked Harry aloud, no longer able to hold his silence. The tale had interested him so, how at one point everyone was at peace until one man ruined it all. It was kind of how he viewed his life. He once had a happy family until Voldemort took it all away from him because he feared the kind of power an infant supposedly had. Just like how those people died because others feared their abilities.

He looked up expecting to see Lin trying to dissuade him or Snape glaring at him for interrupting him. But they did neither; in fact Lin



was no longer in the room and Snape was staring weirdly at him that made him highly uncomfortable.

Snape watched as the boy fidgeted slightly in his seat. How he wanted to tell the boy the truth this instance! But he knew he must not haste, too much was at stake for him to indulge in something that could wait.

You've been waiting all his life, shouted an irate voice in his head.

Then I can wait a bit more, he snapped at the voice, making it stop.

Snape watched the boy carefully before answering the question he knew would change the boy's view on things. "Before departing forever into their secret plane, the kings cast a spell to all those who had betrayed them, erasing their memories of ever having to know of such great power. They banished them and their future descendants outside the protective spells of the Clandestine Plane, and stripped them of their gifted abilities leaving only the most basic Magyck abilities at their disposal. It was probably the worst thing the Court or the Council had ever used its powers on against a fellow being."

"Now wizards and other beings everywhere live without the knowledge that they'd once held much more power than mere wand spells and that they were the ones who'd caused entire races of magical beings to go into hiding to protect themselves from the lure of greed that is still so rampant," said Snape concluding his tale.

"Wait," said Harry, understanding what had just been said. "You mean to tell me that it was us, wizards, who tried to kill an entire race just so as to gain more power?" He stared incredulously at the man before him.

"It was long ago, Harry, people's mind set back then was quite – immoral," stated Snape slowly, articulating the last word in disgust. "And to answer your question, it's yes and no."

"What kind of answer is that, Sn – sir?" Harry amended the last word at once when he saw his professor eyeing him intensely.

"Yes, as in it was the wizard kind who once tried and failed to control the power," replied Snape angrily for the first time since he'd step

into the room. Harry watched as colour slowly appeared in his professor's pale facade.

"And no, it wasn't us," continued Snape once he'd gotten himself controlled.

"What do you mean it wasn't us?" wondered Harry, leaning forward, confusion etched on his sharper features. "You said it was wizards who caused the revolution."

Snape bolted out of his chair so quickly causing Harry to lean back in surprise. Standing by the window, he said in a deep, slow voice. "You've got to understand, it was the wizards who caused the initial war for power. It was them and certain others who tried to eradicate various races of magical entities for fear of their power and to use it for their own gain."

Turning solemn eyes towards the green-eyed boy, he continued, "It was the wizards who forced us into hiding."

It took awhile for Harry to process what he'd just heard and when he did, he couldn't quite get the words out of his mouth. He stayed silent, sitting stiff on the bed, watching dust particles settle on the carpeted floor.

"Us..." he repeated tentatively, still staring at the floor.

"Yes, Harry, us," affirmed Snape, walking away from the window back to the couch. "You and I are not wizards, never have nor will we ever be wizards. We possess abilities that wizards can only scarcely imagine. We don't even need a wand to produce Magyck for it runs strongly in our veins, pulsating and sustaining us."

Harry closed his eyes tightly, trying to get a grip of what was being said to him. "If... if I'm not a wizard, then what am I?" he stated, his voice a controlled calm.

This time it took Harry looking at Snape in a aren't-you-going-to-tell-me manner before he told him what he asked for. "You're half – Vampyre," he said softly, leaning down to stare at him more closely.

Harry blinked idiotically; he couldn't believe his ears. The man had just told him that he was a blood sucking vampire; it had to be some

kind of joke, he neither had a fang nor a hunger for blood. But then a subconscious part of him found none of it surprising at all, like he'd just been told he was a healthy boy.

"You've got to be joking," he laughed mirthlessly.

Snape pulled back in his couch and gave Harry a serious look, "I'm not joking, Harry. I would never joke of such a thing."

Harry stood from where had been sitting for over an hour and started pacing the room. His head was such a mess; he didn't know what to make of things anymore. He was lucky he wasn't going mental right now after all he'd found out. First he found out he could no longer trust his friends and now his most hated professor was being different towards him and telling him he was a vampire. He didn't how much more of these bumps he could take.

Snape watched as the distressed boy paced up and down the room, creating thread marks on the carpet. He hated to think what was going on inside the boy's head and he was about to add another one.

"How's this possible?" mumbled Harry, not missing a beat in his pacing.

"What?" said Snape, having lost himself in his own thoughts.

"How is this possible!" repeated Harry, stopping in front of his professor. "How is all this possible? How was it that no one ever told me? Remus? Sirius? Dumbledore? Why didn't any of them tell me that I'm this-this –" Harry spread his arms before him and glared at his most hated professor, his green eyes demanding for the truth.

Snape chose his words carefully before answering, "It's because none of them knew who you really are."

"Oh, and it so happens only you know that I'm a vampire?" snapped Harry. "Why is that, Snape? Why is it that those closer to me know nothing of this except you?"

"I'd expect the answer to that question to be very plain the moment I stepped foot into this room," replied Snape slowly.

Harry raised his brow at the weird statement but before he could comment on it, he caught his reflection once again framed on the window. He saw the higher cheek bones, the fuller lips, the thinner brow and the edgier shape of his face. It all seemed extremely familiar to Harry as if he'd seen them before but he couldn't remember where. But then he saw his professor's reflection reflected on the window as well, standing just behind his; it was then that he realized where he'd seen his face before.

Harry stared at his professor; shock could clearly be seen etched on his face. He shook his head, slowly at first but soon got so vigorous it was surprising his head was still attached to his head.

"No..." mumbled Harry, not wanting to believe what he'd seen. "No. No."

Snape stood from where he was seated and moved towards the boy. Harry however shied away from him still mumbling his denial under his breath. "Harry," Snape tried to reach out to the boy.

"NO!" shouted Harry, "It's not true. You're lying."

"Harry, it's true. You are my son." Snape's voice was cracking as if he was trying to stop himself from breaking down uncharacteristically before the boy.

"LIAR!"

Golden light soon engulfed Harry in a cocoon, spinning him high in the air. The power that came from the boy sent Snape flying across the room, sending him sprawling on the floor.

"Do not fight it, child!" cried Snape, helplessly watching his son struggle with truth and power.

The door to the room slammed open shocking Snape, making him turn his attention away from his son's erratically spinning body. The two women who had come into the room stopped to witness the scene before. But as soon as the urgency of the situation came back to them, they rushed into the room to where Snape laid in a heap.

"What happened?" asked a woman with flaming red hair. Lin who had entered with her went to Snape's other side.

"He knows and he's losing control," said Snape in one breath, pointing at the boy.

The woman immediately reached for her wand and pointed it at the boy, who seemed to be locked in a silent scream of horror. She chanted a string of ancient words that slowly lowered the boy to the floor. Once Harry was low enough, she made her way to him.

She took Harry in her arms and whispered soft, comforting words at him. Running her hand into his long hair she said, "It's over for now. Open your eyes, child."

Harry's eyes fluttered open revealing a pair of shining green eyes that made the woman smile.

"Mum," Harry gasped, clutching the robe of the woman who held him in her arms.

"Shush... rest now, I won't go anywhere," said the woman softly, tears slowly flowing unchecked down her eyes. She watched as her son's expression betrayed him of his emotions and soon found herself engulfed in a hug she thought she would never feel again.

"Mum," Harry cried openly, holding his mother for dear life.

## Chapter 12 Difficulties

The glare of the morning sun was what stirred him awake. Lifting his hand to protect his eyes from the brilliant light of the sun, Harry rose from the bed feeling heavy and tired. The events of the previous night were hazy at best but there was something he knew had to be a dream, a dream he wished would come to reality. The image of him being held in his mother's arms evoked such deep longing in him that he didn't know he still possessed at this age. He didn't know for how long he sat on the bed, mulling over the thoughts that swirled around his head. He thought his life couldn't get any worse with him being the 'Chosen One' and everything else thrust in his life. But now he was supposed to believe he was the son of Severus Snape a.k.a. a vampire?

Staring at the wall as if it had somehow gravely offended him and his hands gripping on the sheets so tightly that his knuckles had turned white, he barely noticed the bedroom door open.

Lin treaded lightly into the room at the sight of the teenage boy brooding on the bed. Last night had been one hell of a ride for all of them and she doubted that the boy before her would be able to get back his grip on the things that really mattered without their help.

When Harry finally felt her presence in the room, she couldn't help but take a step backwards as he turned to look at her with such an intensity she'd never seen before. His scrutinizing green eyes followed her every move as she tried to rid herself off the awkward situation.

"It's Selene now, isn't it? What happened to Lin?" Harry said gruffly.

"What?" said Lin, confused at the accusation.

"You heard me," intoned Harry.

Lin took a step forward but wary that one wrong move could complicate things concerning Harry. Regarding what she would tell him, she carefully said, "I am Lin. My full name is Selene. I haven't lied to you."

"Except for the fact that I'm the son of a supposed Death Eater slash vampire and that you are actually my sister. Yeah you haven't lied much, have you?" Harry snorted eyeing her critically.

"You wouldn't believe me even if I was the one who told you about the truth. Tell me, would you have believed me if I'd told you then that who you were before wasn't who you really are?" Lin replied.

Harry looked away from her, not bothering to give her his reply. True, he'd never have believed it had she told him about it before he saw how he really looked like but that didn't mean he believed it all now. As a matter of fact, his feelings regarding the revelation of his past were split; a part of him wanted to embrace this new life that was given to him. A way for him to escape all the troubles he'd been given and to start anew. Yet another part of him detested the fact that nothing in his life had ever been stable. Everything seemed to be in constant shift and the longer it went, the more he lost control of where he wanted his life to go. He had no idea whether accepting this new reality would help him or would it ultimately bring about the end that he'd always been able to elude.

The silence that stretched before them was an uncomfortable one; Lin had no idea how to broach the subject of his past and increasing powers without further aggravating him.

"Harry –" she started.

"Look, will you stop calling me Harry?" he snapped. "You and I both know I was never Harry Potter! I don't even know what I am since after last night I'm no longer a wizard! So don't call me Harry anymore! He never even existed."

"What do you want me to call you then?" asked Lin patiently.

"I don't know, you tell me. You're the one who's supposed to know everything. Oh wait, you never tell any of them!" said Harry.

"Look, I didn't come here to pick a fight with you."

"Really? And here I thought that was your hobby." he replied, voice dripping with sarcasm.

Lin sighed, narrowing her eyes to gauge the teen's real thoughts. "Be a stubborn prat for all I care but your parents would like to speak to you again in a more different environment, so I suggest you get out of that bed this instance."

"Severus Snape is not my f—" began Harry but upon hearing what Lin had said, did a double take and stared at her. "Parents?"

"Yes, Harry, parents. Both our mother and father." said Lin gently stressing the words, knowing that Harry wasn't himself last night to fully realize what he saw.

Harry, whose mouth was slightly opened in surprise, stared wistfully ahead, "But – but how's that possible?"

"Like I told you before, not everything is as it seems, and things were done for a reason no matter how difficult they were." However Harry was no longer listening for he had his hands pressed firmly on his head. His muffled groan caught her attention, making her move to his direction.

"This would be much easier if you'd stop hesitating. Follow what you think is true. Look within yourself and you'll realize that what we're trying to tell aren't lies," she said softly, sitting on the side of the bed, hoping to get through the confused teen.

"Do you ever wonder how you got here in the first place?" asked Lin, trying to get a reaction from the boy.

Once the pain in his head subsided to a bearable throb, Harry lifted his gaze to look at his supposed sister, the answer to her inquiry clear on his face.

"It was the ring," she stated.

"It was a Portkey," said Harry, lifting his right hand where the ring was still located since his arrival.

"It's more than a Portkey," answered Lin, sliding an identical silver ring around her finger. "It's a key."

"A key?"



Lin nodded. "Yes. It's a key back home."

Harry stared at her before running his finger slowly on the smooth ring on his finger and felt it warming up once more. It was glowing faintly while the runes slowly started to dissolve into the silver leaving one lone symbol. He remembered the symbol; it was the very same one that appeared to him in the Leaky Cauldron.

"Home," he mumbled under his breath.

"Home. Gaidar." repeated Lin who was watching him. "You see, the ring wouldn't have brought you here if you hadn't called out to it in the first place. So somewhere in you, you are ready to accept this. It is only your fear that is stopping you."

Harry stared at the ring on his finger, feeling its warmth slowly course through him, enveloping him; familiar yet foreign at the same time.

Was this what he really wanted? He thought to himself. To be different from all the rest?

Or to have a family once again? Another part of him asked. After so long it should be very clear to him what he wanted, but why was it that when it was finally offered to him, he found it harder to accept?

"It is only human of us to have doubts and fears, they keep us alive when face with the unknown. But often times these fears hinder us from seeing what reality there really is before our eyes." continued Lin.

"If you ever decide that you're done running and hiding, we'll be downstairs." She left the room, leaving the confused teen to sort out her words and his thoughts.

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To the entire wizarding world, Lily Evans was known as Lily Potter, the beautiful wife of James Potter. There was nothing really wrong with that statement since she was his wife to the eyes of many. However very few knew that the marriage was a fake one; a ruse set up to fool a powerful man. In fact before the deception had been carried out, she had already been married to another man, a man

she'd known and loved from a young age; Severus Snape. To this day, no one but a certain few knew of the marriage, even after her death, she was known as a Potter. And she didn't have a problem with that; it just meant that she did her job well, there was no need to let the wizarding world think otherwise.

On the other hand, an even smaller majority of people knew that she had survived that faithful night on the 31st of October. The body that was found later that night by Hagrid was in all actuality, only a transfigured piece of wood. Though the attack had gravely injured her, she had still managed to escape the scene before the Aurors arrived. But her hasty escape to ensure that no one would find her prevented her from freeing her son from the clutches of another Dark Lord.

For years she'd lived in hiding, recuperating and gaining the powers she'd sacrificed to make sure both she and her son would survive to see the day their enemies would crumble below their feet. However nothing could take away the fact that no mother would want to see her child separated from her and to be unknowingly controlled by others. She'd vowed that when the day finally came to be reunited with her son, she would make sure no one would take him away from her again.

"Selene's gone up to check on him," said Severus Snape, walking into a luxuriously cosy parlour complete with a fireplace big enough for five men to stand comfortably in.

Lily, who was sitting by the window, an album prop open on her lap, turned to face her husband. "Wouldn't it be better if I was the one to check on him?"

"Love, we've talked about this," said Severus.

"I know, I know," she replied, looking over at the pristine lake that lay just outside their manor. "I just never expected the extent of his hold on him to be this strong."

"Yes, it is quite unexpected," agreed Severus taking the vacant seat before her. "I believe it's got to do with how he tried to raise him; with the Muggles and all."

"He will not get his hands on him again," she said, her tone hard and cold, the pages of the album crumpling in her anger.

Placing a firm and reassuring hand on his wife's trembling ones, he said, "I swear to you he will not touch our son again."

"I don't think I'd be able to bear to see such a scene as last night again," she whispered fragilely, completely opposite from her earlier tone, took her husband's strong hands.

"We'll see," was all Severus could say to his worried wife, for he too didn't know for how much longer their son would be held prisoner of his own power.

At that precise moment a house-elf wearing a miniature tailcoat appeared into the room. He was unlike the ones that could be found at Hogwarts. He was slightly taller and his skin was less saggy though the ears were just as long and flabby.

"The Taie and Airu have come to seek an audience with My Lord and Lady," said the elf.

"Let them in, Trooker," said Severus, rising from his seat while his wife went to stow away the album she'd previously been looking at. Trooker, the house-elf, bowed before disappearing in thin air.

No sooner had the elf left the room, the parlour door opened once more to reveal two hooded and cloaked figures. The shorter of the two was the one that walked into the room first followed by the other one, both their faces concealed in the shadows of their hood.

"My Lord, My Lady," the two hooded figures bowed at both Severus and Lily.

Lily gestured at the empty seats in the room and all four of them sat down, a tray of cookies and tea magically appearing before them.

"What is it that you've got to tell us?" asked Lily, taking a cup of piping hot tea from the tray.

"The Ministry is dabbling into unknown and dangerous waters by seeking out a secret that is better left untouched," one of them began.

"Who?" asked Severus.

"Fudge." supplied the taller figure.

"That spineless old fool!" exclaimed Severus.

"What is he up to?" asked Lily, a hand firmly placed on her husband's arm to restrain him.

"We are not exactly sure; it seems that something Harry did at the DOM in June caught his attention. He does not know what it is, but we believe it was Harry's outburst at Lestrangle and because of that, Scrimgeour has given him access to the Old Files," replied the shorter figure.

A look of apprehension appeared on both Severus and Lily's faces; this was completely unexpected and could affect the overall outcome of the war if they did not act quickly.

"Has the Dark Lord been informed?" asked Severus.

"The Dark Lord has his own spies within the Ministry and I'm sure he has been informed of this."

"Yes, yes," mumbled Severus absentmindedly, his thoughts on how to best resolve their new problem without attracting too much attention. "I want the two of you to return and act as if you've not heard anything. Keep us posted and if you think things are getting out of hand, you may intervene, however be as discreet as you can be. We cannot risk losing everything when we've come this close to succeeding."

"Yes, My Lord,"

"Go now before your absence is noticed."

The two mysterious visitors gave one last bow to Severus and Lily before departing the room. On their way to the front door, they met a girl with long dark hair descending a flight of steps. Even with their hood covering their faces, Selene knew who the two strangers were and gave them both a friendly smile.

When Selene entered the parlour where the two hooded figures had come from, she found her father staring darkly at the empty fireplace while her mother was seated in one of the couches, staring thoughtfully ahead.

"Did someone we know die?" she asked bluntly, breaking the stupor her parents were in.

It was Lily who spoke first and gestured for her daughter to come closer, "How is he?"

"Considering what happened last night, he's fine if not a bit enraged and confused," answered Selene sitting beside her mother in the couch.

"Good. Does he –" said Lily, watching the girl expectantly.

"Does he remember what happened last night?" completed Selene, "Most of it, especially his conversation with dad. However when I mentioned you, he had another attack and does not remember anything prior to the power surge other than finding out the truth."

Sadness flashed briefly in Lily's eyes; eyes that were replicated so accurately in her son.

"It was probably the stress of fighting the Magyck within him," said Selene to her mother.

"Yes," mumbled Lily.

"Don't worry, mum, he'll remember soon enough," Selene gave her mother a reassuring smile. "We've done all we can. It's now up to him."

"Yes, love," said Severus, moving away from the fireplace and kneeling before his wife and daughter. "Merlin knows how long you've waited for this."

Lily gave her family a warm smile that reached all the way to her eyes, firing them up with renewed hope and power; their latest problem temporarily wiped from her mind. The only thing that mattered now was getting their family back together and soon their enemies would rue the day they decided to go against her family.

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Day soon gave into night but Harry had yet to make an appearance and it was slowly starting to worry both of his parents. They'd all hoped that by midday he would have at least come down but alas it was not to be. Currently they'd all retreated into a room smaller than the main parlour room albeit cosier.

"Do you want me to go and check on him?" offered Selene before turning in for the night, seeing their worried expressions.

Lily turned to look at her husband's furrowed expression before answering her daughter, "I think it's best if we give him time. It is quite difficult to believe that your life has been nothing more than lie." Selene nodded and bade them both a good night.

"It's me," mumbled Severus under his breath after awhile; his thoughts miles away.

"What's that love?" asked Lily.

Severus slowly moved away from the table he had been leaning on earlier and walked the length of the room. "It's me," he repeated.

"What about you?" said Lily, still confused.

"He can't forgive me," said Severus, looking straight at her, his expression blank.

Lily stared in bewilderment at her husband's words. "You've done nothing to him."

"That's exactly it, Lils, I have done nothing for him," replied Severus as if the words themselves weighed a ton. "When he got to Hogwarts I should have told him then. But what did I do? I drove him away; made him loathe me. Now he can't even stand to be in the same room as me without hatred written across his face."

Lily gave her husband a soft look and made the short distance to her husband and gave him a comforting hug in which he gave into. "It wasn't your fault." She whispered into his ear.

Severus immediately pulled away from the embrace at that and walked away from her, "I could have done something. I was there, I should have done something."

"I know it was hard watching him being controlled and not being able to do anything about it. But there was nothing we could do Sev, you were both being watched all the time; just one unsuspecting move to get close to him and the old man would have figured us out." said Lily trying to get through her husband.

"I just wish I hadn't pushed him so much," said Severus, not daring to look at his wife. "You should have seen how he looked like when he saw me last night. There was so much hate in his eyes, I don't know if I'll be able to make it up to him."

"You hadn't meant to do all those things to him Severus. I know you, love; everything you've done the past five years, you've done with a heavy heart. You never wanted it to get to this point but it did and it wasn't because of you, the old man was a huge factor in all that had happened. And now the time has come for us to set everything straight again; to get back all that was taken from us."

"I just hope he finds it in him to forgive me," he said sadly and softly.

This time Lily grabbed his arm and pulled him so that they were now facing each other. Beautiful green eyes gazed softly and lovingly at obsidian eyes, touching the core of the once harden man. "I look at you and I see the kind of man you really are. If our son truly is back with us then I believe he too will be able to look at you and see you for who you truly are and he'll come to realize that he'd never truly known the man behind the mask of Severus Snape."

She gave him a tender kiss on the forehead, soft and gentle, reminding them that as long as they remained strong, they would be able to get through this completely whole.

But then an explosion that shook every living thing residing in the manor surprised both Severus and Lily causing them to be pushed against the wall by a force that was moving all over the manor.

As soon as the spell of the force vanished, Severus got to his feet and moved to check on his wife who seemed to be in a daze, lying limply on the floor.

"Lily, Lily!" he exclaimed, shaking her shoulders. Lily blinked and turned her eyes towards her husband.

"What was that?" she asked, using her husband as support to get back on her feet.

"I believe it came from Harry's room," said Severus, helping his wife.

"Do you think he's done it?" wondered Lily making her way out of the room.

"Only one way to find out," replied Severus matching his wife's strides and running towards the source of the earlier explosion.

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Miles away from the manor that stood atop a hill, within the bowels of a dark house, a man was sitting by a table with the aid of a single candle light. He had been going through a series of classified documents when he felt a powerful surge coarse through the room, causing him to be unceremoniously thrown off his chair. Once he was back on his feet, the sight of the room that greeted him sent shock waves throughout his old frame. The papers that littered the table were burnt to ashes as if caught in a wild fire and everything else in the room was haphazardly thrown off its place, leaving the whole room in chaos.

The man stared wide eyed at the destroyed artefacts on the table and cursed loudly while making his way to the door that led outside, checking to make sure that the other occupants of the house were oblivious to what had happened. Rummaging his cloak for a bag of Floo Powder, he made his way to the empty grate and he tossed nearly half the contents of the bag into it.

"We have a problem!" he shouted gruffly at the green flames.

A/N: Alright readers, what do you think? Please read and review. I know there are hundreds of you who have my story on alert and this story already has +30, 000 hits. I want to hear from my silent



readers.... In light of the release of the trailer, please please make this author even happier with your reviews!

I would also like to give many thanks to the readers who have consistently reviewed every single chapter I've posted. Especial mention to Foxmac, The French Dark Lord

## Chapter 13 The Plunge

The moment Lin left the room, Harry was left with nothing to do but think. Hate as he might how his life was currently heading towards to, especially with how others seem to know more about him than he actually did about himself, he still couldn't find it in him to believe all that had been revealed to him.

Yes, he hated that people tended to have more control over his life than he actually did most of the time, but he had trusted those people to explain it all to him in the end. Dumbledore, the man he had looked up to as his mentor; the man who he thought would guide him with like a grandfather through the ordeals in his life. Sirius, his godfather, the man who supposedly held the links to his murky past; a man he had cared for like a father. Then there were his friends, the only ones he'd known in his entire life and hoped would stick with him forever. But all of them, one way or another, had failed him.

Was this why he feared to acknowledge the truth? That it would somehow manage to hurt him again in the end? He had never been so confused in his life. During the early years of his life with the Dursleys', he'd known nothing of love, of trust or of friendship; nothing to confuse him of life. He had no expectations and had quietly accepted his meagre existence; at least then he had a little control over certain things. But Hogwarts had introduced him to all that he had missed out in his younger years and he was pleased to say that his first few years at the castle were the happiest he'd ever been. He had friends who were not afraid of his cousin for the first time in his life; adults who wanted nothing more than protect him from his enemies. He had finally gained something to live for and it made him feel alive for the first time.

However, unlike the hurt the Dursleys' had given him, he'd never really felt a part of their family anyway, the second time around was much more painful and difficult to understand. He couldn't quite believe what made his friends, his best friends, question him and shun him after a mistake in judgement. Then there was Dumbledore; he knew he had a hand in some of the things that were going on. He wasn't going to believe that the old man had no idea of his parentage or true nature, no matter how bizarre it was. And finally there was Sirius. The ache in his chest that was once constricting was now merely a dull ache. He hadn't forgotten of the loss, it was

still raw as it once was when he saw the man falling into the veil, just that he no longer had energy to feel anything but a painful throb.

He just didn't know what to think anymore, didn't know whom to trust and he had no one to turn to with his troubles, and he knew that if he didn't get himself sorted out soon – he didn't even want to think of what could happen.

He'd been pacing the room for Merlin knows how long, the same thoughts constantly running through his head – his parents were alive.

"My parents are alive," he mumbled once again. It was so surreal. All his life he thought he was an orphan, destined to do the biddings of others. He should be happy, shouldn't he, that they were still alive? But why was he so insistent on holding on to a past that wasn't?

A glint towards the other side of the room caught his attention; the rays of the late afternoon sun penetrating the room through the window in beams of brilliant orange light. Even amidst the bright light, Harry still managed to briefly catch his reflection in the window before turning away from it again, acting as if looking at it made him burn.

"Severus Snape is my father ..." panted Harry, that something within him gnawing at him more forcefully. But as that thought processed itself in his head, another one came to mind, "My own father hates me ..."

It was hard to imagine that the man, who made five years of his life a living hell, was actually his biological father. And to know that the man knew he was his son all along but still acted otherwise made it all the much harder to accept. Memories of the many years he'd suffered with Snape fuelled the fire that was already roaring in him.

Then suddenly his vision clouded once more, making him grab onto the armrest of the couch to prevent himself from falling over. Dread soon started to sink in when even after he tried shaking his head, his vision still would not clear, in fact it seemed to have gotten worst because now he was feeling slightly light-headed.

Harry Potter was not afraid of pain; he'd had far too much experience with it to make him at least tolerable to it. But then again, he was not really Harry Potter, was he? He was the son of Severus Snape, an ex-Death Eater, a Vampyre! There were certain aspects of himself that he wasn't so sure anymore.

Pressure was slowly building up in his head as he struggled to keep himself aware and he knew he was beginning to imagine things because he was now hearing his own voice speaking in his head. The voice was more of an echo as if the person speaking was inside a hollowed room and it was calling out to him.

He was starting to freak out; he knew that even in the wizarding world hearing voices was not common, let alone a voice inside your own head. But as per every time he tried to fight off the force that had been steadily gaining strength, it caused him more pain than he bargained for.

It was by sheer will power that he was still conscious and not sprawled on the floor; his knuckles white as he pressed harder on the armrest and his face crunched up in pain, sheen of sweat beading down his face. His breathing was becoming laboured by the minute and it was causing his head to spin; the room becoming a mayhem of blurred images.

"... it is only human of us to have doubts and fears, they keep us alive when faced with the unknown ...."

But he wasn't really human, was he?

"... often times these fears hinder us from seeing what reality there really is before our eyes ..."

Had he really changed that much that he could no longer see who and what he really was?

"... if you ever decide that you're done running and hiding ..."

It was getting tiring, really. He'd been fighting and running for as long as he could remember; in his youth with the Dursleys, with the wizarding world and Voldemort, and now with the truth. He really wanted a break. He may no longer be human, but there was only still so much he could take. Maybe just this once, just for awhile,

he'd let go. Let go of everything that was weighing down on him. Just for awhile, until he could start all over again. Just this once ... He was so very tired ....

And he let go, darkness slowly encompassing him, wrapping him up 'til all he knew was that he could now finally breathe.

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It was dark and the silence that stretched was eerie; if someone were to drop a pin from miles away, he would have probably heard it as if it were right next to him. He looked at his surroundings and realized that they were unknown to him. He tried to remember how he got there but there seemed to be a shroud of cloth that was preventing him from 'looking' into scenes other than that of where he was in.

"Hello," he said only to hear his voice returned as an echo.

Walking blindly around, he found the terrain to be uncommonly flat and even. He'd walked for only a couple of metres when he encountered a solid barrier, abruptly halting his steps. Brows furrowed in confusion, he followed the wall, hoping that its end would lead him a way out of the darkness. He followed the wall for what seemed like hours when finally he felt it turn sharply into a corner, leading him off to a different direction. Anticipation sprung in him at the thought that he had found a way out and he continued on, closely following the walls that led him deeper into the darkness.

Time seem to be a non existent entity in this place, he felt as if he was suspended in time, never moving forwards or backwards. The fear of being here and never knowing how long the cold cloak of darkness would be holding him was slowly digging into him as he walked on. He'd encountered three more of the sharp corners before he realized he'd been going around in circles. How he realized that in the dark was beyond him but he knew it was true – he was boxed in.

Looking around the dark space in a new light, he felt its four walls closing in on him. Now he really wanted to get out of here; where ever here was. Backing away from the condemned walls, hoping to escape the caging feeling that was building the longer he was in the dark, he heard the faint sounds of footsteps approaching him. He

turned on the spot hoping to see whoever it was coming towards him but it was impossible to distinguish anything in the penetrating darkness.

He stood there, standing as still as possible, hoping that whomever the footsteps belonged to wouldn't be able to see him as well and pass by him. But the footsteps continued to come, nearing his location with every step. The sound of the footsteps were amplified even more due to the empty dark hollowed space, making them sound closer than they actually were and they were grating at his nerves. But suddenly the footsteps stopped and the only thing he could hear was the frantic thumping of his heart, sounding as if it wanted to beat at his ribs until it was out of his chest.

The acute silence was just as unnerving, if not more so, as the footsteps. He didn't wish for the footsteps to return, but he didn't want to be all alone in the dark space as well. It was ringing in his ears, the stillness of the room, not helping him at all to calm down.

"Harry,"

If he'd been able to move, he would have jumped up in shock. He barely heard the voice as it whispered directly into his ear, freezing him in his spot, pale as a ghost; heart beating like a madman and his lungs burning with the way he was breathing, harsh and loud.

"I have been waiting for you,"

This time the voice came from behind him. Getting back a bit of his bearings, he spun around hoping to see to whom the voice belonged to. However he was met with nothing but cold air that sent the hairs on the back of his head to stand on end.

"Show yourself!" shouted Harry, hating how his voice came out more of a terrified squeak.

A slight haze appeared in the distance before him and was steadily making its way closer to him. Backing away from the approaching mist, he found himself pressed against the unseen walls that were caging him.

Just as the mist stopped its approach somewhere in the middle of the dark space, a gust of wind he had no idea how it came to be in

the room, caused the mist to swirl upwards in itself. The mist continued to swirl around in the middle of the room until a shape slowly started to form; starting from the base and steadily made its way upwards. At first the shape was undistinguishable; just one elongated pack of mist. But then it slowly got more defined. One final gust of wind later and what stood before him was undeniable a silhouette of a man, however it was too far to identify.

"Who are you?" he shouted to the figure across the room.

But instead of an answer, the figure just moved towards him, an unearthly gait in his steps as if he were floating rather than walking. Harry waited tensely for the person to come within his viewing distance but even with a few metres separating them, the stranger's features were still veiled by the shadows.

Then finally the man was standing right before him and the first thing that came to view were familiar looking green eyes staring intensely at him.

"Hello, Harry," said the man.

"Who are you?" demanded Harry.

"Can you not guess?" said the mysterious man, spreading his arms, finally releasing the perpetual shadow that seem to cling to him.

Harry choked out at the sight that greeted him. Sharp features adorned a pallid face. Silky dark hair fell softly on his shoulders, giving the person a more pointed look about him. His built was tall and slender with just enough muscles to show that he was not someone to mess with. But what made Harry recoil was the obvious sight of deadly sharp fangs protruding from the sides of the mysterious man's mouth.

Harry tried not to shake helplessly at the predatory look the man was giving him. Though his fangs were not bared directly at him, he couldn't help but fear the overwhelming power that seemed to be radiating from every bit of the man.

"Well, Harry ..." his voice was deep and commanding.

"You're a Vampire!" Harry gasped out.

The man smiled albeit eerily due to his long fangs, "If I'm not mistaken, so are you, Harry."

"I am not!" cried Harry, disgusted at the mere thought.

"The truth can't stay hidden forever, Harry, in time it will find a way to reveal itself. That has always been how it is," said the man.

"You don't know who I am!" said Harry, trying to calm himself down.

"Oh you'll be surprised of how much I know about you, Harry James Potter. Or should I say, Haeden Ares Snape?" the man was so close to him that he nearly touched the tip of his nose.

Harry moved swiftly away from the man, "I don't know what you're talking about!"

"No, of course you don't." He retreated quickly and leaned against the "wall", watching as Harry backed away from him.

"Who are you and what do you want from me?"

The man pushed himself off the wall and walked towards Harry once more. Harry tried to move away from him but he could not help but be frozen on the spot, the Vampyre's emerald eyes piercing through him.

"I, Harry, am your darkest secret." The Vampyre's voice was so low and menacing that Harry couldn't help but shudder. "And as for what I want from you, I want you to help me get out of here."

"And why would I do that?" cried Harry, swallowing down his fears and bringing forth the bravery that seemed to have temporarily abandoned him.

"Because, Harry..." at this point, the Vampyres' voice was barely a whisper, his mouth positioned directly before Harry's left ear. Harry closed his eyes and gritted his teeth as the Vampyre's warm breath touched the nape of his neck, his fangs coming deathly close for a strike. "I am you."



Rounded green eyes fluttered open in shock to stare wildly at the creature that stood before him, an unreadable expression on his pale face.

"What do you mean?" said Harry but the Vampyre just stared at him with those piercing eyes of his. "What do you mean?" he demanded once more, voice slightly firmer than before.

The Vampyre watched as Harry worked himself into anxiety; he could see the fear clearly in his eyes and soon he would have the boy where he wanted him, just a bit more and he would free himself of his forsaken place. He could feel the magic calling unto him, empowering him to accomplish what should never have happened.

"You are pathetic, Harry." he began slowly, getting the attention of said boy. "All your life you never had a clue; a puppet knowing nothing but to follow the tugs of the puppet master."

Harry lunged at the indifferent Vampyre but he might as well have attacked air for the Vampyre's lightning quick reflexes allowed him to leap right over his head and land behind him, a feat Harry found amazing. He spun around to find the Vampyre staring at him once more, as if nothing had happened.

"Don't you just find that the truth can be hard to accept sometimes?" he drawled on, making Harry ran straight for him again.

"Shut up!" cried Harry but this time the Vampyre had vanished into thin air, leaving him all alone in the dark space yet again.

"When was the last time you did something without being told to do so, Harry?" asked a bodiless voice Harry knew belonged to the Vampyre.

"Show yourself!" Harry didn't why the Vampyre was asking all of these questions nor did he like what was being implied.

"Why can't you answer me, Harry?" the Vampyre had reappeared a few feet before him and was slowly making his way back towards him. "Is it because you have no idea of what I'm talking about? Or is it because you can't?"

Harry didn't have time to reply for the Vampyre had started to circle him, barking yet another string of questions. "Do you ever wonder why Dumbledore thinks the world of you? Or why he was so adamant to keep you in the dark about your past?"

"You have no idea of what you're talking about!" Harry replied rather shakily, his head starting to hurt with all of these questions. He was trying to fight off the images from his past that had sprung to forefront of his mind the moment the Vampyre started springing out these questions. What were his memories trying to tell him? He had viewed snippets of his past from a different perspective, as if he were watching them from a pensive. But the most disturbing thing was that he couldn't remember some of the scenes he'd seen ever happening to him. Like for instance during his first year when he'd had his first encounter with the Mirror of Erised, he couldn't recall Dumbledore ever approaching him and whispering into his ear before vanishing once more. Or the time during his stay in his Godfather's house when Dumbledore had come to his room and pointed a wand at him. None of these memories made sense, he felt as if someone was pushing his mind onto a television screen and forcing him to view all of these.

"Oh, and because you've lived beyond this dark plane, you know everything that's been happening, don't you?" sneered the Vampyre. "Well, let me tell you something, Mister Harry Potter, Golden Boy, Dumbledore's Man, the Chosen One! You are nothing but a shell! A puppet created by Dumbledore to do all his dirty work. You exist merely because Dumbledore willed it so, or else you'd have died like the rest of them had Dumbledore found no use for you! You are a mere shadow, ripped off from its host, living a life you thought you had every control over."

"Stop it!" screamed Harry, shutting his eyes close and clamping his hands over his ears. The images had doubled during the Vampyre's tirade and it was as if every moment of his short miserable life there was a corresponding scene that he swore he doesn't remember happening to him that shook the foundations of his waning beliefs. He couldn't take it anymore. He was positive he would go mad if this continued on. If he could just wake up from his horrible nightmare, for he knew this had to be nightmare, it just had to be or else everything he'd believed in was all a lie and he didn't know if he could take that right now.

The Vampyre remained silent as Harry trembled all over, his eyes moving frantically behind their lids. He knew it had to happen now; this was the only chance he had to regain himself and take revenge on those who thought they would cage him forever. He was not going to fail now.

He waited until the boy's mumbling ceased so that he could hear him when he delivered his final blow. At last the boy was silent enough to hear him. He walked straight to Harry, less than an inch separating them, his tall frame towering over the boy that was still unnaturally small for his age.

Harry's fear glazed eyes open to find equally green eyes staring at him.

"Tell me," said the Vampyre "how'd you manage to survive that night on Halloween when no other wizard has been able to achieve?"

Harry's eyes remained locked onto the Vampyre but that didn't stop one final image to flash through his mind.

"Stand aside, silly girl!"

"No, not Harry."

"Stand aside!"

"Use me instead, but please don't take my Harry."

"I'm afraid that is out of the question. You've done your part; it's time for the next generation ..."

"NO!"

The woman ran, carrying her son tightly in her arms but before she could make it pass the wizard that stood before the door, a jet of green light had erupted from the wizard's wand and landed straight on the woman's back. The woman swayed on the spot before slowly dropping dead on the floor, her child still clutched tightly in her arms.

"I'm very sorry, child, but this has to be done for the greater good of the magical community. I can't have your kind blotching up all that I've worked so hard for."

The wizard walked towards the woman and bent down to retrieve the bawling child that was still in the protective arms of his mother. After spelling the death grip the woman had on her child, the wizard picked up the crying infant and wrapped him in a light blue blanket he'd retrieved from the floor.

The wizard eyed the dark haired child over his half moon glasses and pulled out his wand once more before casting a spell on the infant that emitted a piercing sound of someone being tortured and surrounded him in darkness. Once the dark light of the spell vanished, the child stayed limply on the old man's arms. You'd have thought that the child was dead if not for the slow rising of his chest or the ragged scar on his forehead that was oozing a lot of blood, the remnant of the dark curse that had been cast on him.

"Welcome, Harry James Potter, to my world." whispered Albus Dumbledore, the greatest Light advocate the wizarding world has ever known and the true reason why he, Harry, had become an orphan.

Harry collapsed on his knees, screaming for all his denial was worth. This was not true. Voldemort killed his parents, not Dumbledore. This was all his imagination, a horrible nightmare brought on by the loss of his godfather; pretty soon his aunt would come knocking on his door telling him to make breakfast. But when Harry gazed up he saw the pallid features of the Vampyre that was standing stoically before him and he was still stuck in the middle of nowhere; dark, desolate and utterly maddening.

He dropped on his behind and scurried off as fast as he could on the other direction, his eyes still locked on the mysterious man that claimed he was Harry and that his life was a lie. However, no sooner had he placed a few feet between him and the Vampyre, his back connected with one of the invisible walls of the dark plane. The Vampyre watched with intense eyes as Harry tried to escape from him but the moment he collided with the wall, he made his way towards him.

Harry pressed his eyes close, willing for the images to just fade away and for his mother's ringing screams to stop. He knew the Vampyre was closing in on him because the voices were getting louder it was making his head hurt so badly. He just wanted to get

out of here, back to his derelict bedroom, back to his miserable existence, forgetting everything he'd ever learned tonight. He didn't care anymore, he'd had enough, and he couldn't take them anymore, he just wanted for it all to end.

A hand to his shoulder caused him to scream madly and to fling his body away from the touch. It was a sight no person would ever want to see, Harry was curled up like a ball, shaking madly, hands clamped tightly over his head and whimpering like a sick little kid.

The Vampyre refused to remove his hand from Harry's shoulders, shaking it to stir the boy into recognition. "Harry," he called out softly to the boy, "Harry!"

Harry's eye fluttered open, the eyes of a lost child seeping through the emerald eyes that was once upon a time so filled with life. "Make it stop ..." he cried softly. "Please ... make it all stop!"

The Vampyre complied and with unearthly strength, lifted the hysterical boy onto his feet. Images were still flashing through Harry's mind but somehow the Vampyre's presence was no longer threatening. In fact he wanted the Vampyre to help him get rid of all of these and to make him forget. Slowly the Vampyre hoisted him up to his feet and turned his neck so that it came before his mouth. Harry stiffened at the feeling of coolness that touched his bare neck but kept still, knowing that the Vampyre could do no more hurt that he'd not already suffered.

Two long deadly sharp fangs shone brightly in the darkness, a mere centimetres from Harry's jugular vein that was pulsating in time with his erratically beating heart. The Vampyre closed his eyes, revelling at the rhythmic flow of blood that was coursing through the boy's veins. He licked the large vein lustfully, steadying the flow of blood, no need for the boy to bleed to death when he'd done his job.

The Vampyre's eyes shone brightly in hunger and prepared to thrust his fangs on the boy's soft neck. It was painful at first when the fangs pieced through his skin but soon Harry relaxed and allowed the Vampyre to drink his blood. His breathing steadied and he felt as if his worries were being sucked away together with his blood, down to the Vampyre's throat and out of his body.

Once it was accomplished, the Vampyre retracted his bloodied fangs from the limp boy and slowly allowed the body to fall down the floor. He felt Harry's blood coursing through his veins, mixing together with his, empowering him. Soon the Vampyre cried out loud and allowed the magic to wrap itself around him and in a matter of seconds he was surrounded in bright white light.

And the dark cage that had imprisoned him for so many years, was just as it is, dark and empty, not a single soul trapped in its walls.

## Chapter 14 Confrontations

The second floor landing was in complete darkness by the time Severus and Lily got there. Immediately pulling his wand from its holster, Severus cast Lumos to illuminate their way. They soon found out that the entire second floor landing looked as if someone had let loose a troll in a rampage. The enchanted bulbs that floated along the hall had all exploded, littering the floor in dust of fine glass. On the walls, most of the portraits had fallen off and some were merely hanging on thin wires; all the occupants in a ditsy daze. But worse than all the damage on the floor was the body that lay limp on the floor covered in shards of glass.

"Selene!" Lily ran towards her fallen daughter, dragging behind her limp leg, the sound of glass cracking under her feet. Selene laid sprawled on the floor with her left arm twisted in a manner that showed that it was clearly broken.

"Is she alright?" Lily asked Severus, who had rushed after his wife and was kneeling on Selene's other side.

"She's broken her arm and has a concussion," said Severus after he'd finished his diagnosis and pointed his wand at the unconscious girl. "Enervate!"

Selene revived with a sharp intake of breath and was quickly pulled into the arms of Severus. "F-father."

"Shush..." whispered Severus, helping his daughter to sit up while supporting her broken arm.

"What happened, Selene?" asked Lily.

"I don't know," said Selene once she'd gotten her breathing regulated and was leaning on her father's chest. "I was about to check on Harry when all of a sudden there was a flash of light and the last I knew was that I was flying through the air."

Lily and Severus looked at each other anxiously but before they could say anything else, Selene pulled herself off from her father's hold and spoke. "I'll be okay, go check on him."

Severus gave his daughter a final assessing look before nodding at her. "Stay here, Selene," said Severus, holding onto her arms whilst she stood and leaned on a corner table that hadn't crashed on the floor.

"Will you be okay?" asked Lily, fussing over her daughter.

"Mum, I broke an arm, I think I'll live. Go on and check on Harry, I know something's happened to him," said Selene, a dark look about her, pushing her mother towards the door to their left.

Severus, who had gone ahead of his wife after making sure Selene could stand by herself, was already inside the room. If the hall outside looked like a troll had gone through it, the room where Harry was staying looked as if a whole battle had happened within its walls. Even in the dark, Severus could see that nothing of the room's previous furnishings were in tact or in one piece.

They'd all been expecting a magical surge from the moment they brought Harry back, but none of them were prepared for it to end up like this; an entire floor utterly destroyed. The power behind the surge was inconceivable and it was even scarier to think of how powerful the person behind it all really is.

The unnatural silence in the room caused Severus' highly sensitive vampiric senses to stand on guard, there was definitely something wrong here. Where was Harry? Severus surveyed the destruction but couldn't find the boy anywhere. Then all of a sudden he felt a wand pointed at the back of his head. He'd had far too much experience like this while in the service of the Dark Lord to know that any sudden movement on his part would make the boy even more aggravated, therefore doing nothing they'd all regret.

"Harry," said Severus trying to calm the clearly delirious child.

"Shut up, Snape!" intoned Harry with so much venom that Severus' heart constricted in way he never thought it would.

"Harry, I know there are a lot of things you don't understand, if you could just let us explain..." said Severus trying to negotiate with his son. But instead of calming down the boy like he'd intended, the wand on the back of his head was jabbed harder and even though



he could not see the boy's expression, Severus knew that Harry was seething due to the waves of emotions radiating off of the boy.

"Don't you dare call me, Harry! I am not Harry, nor was I ever Harry. I don't know who I am any more, except that you are apparently my father." Never in a hundred years would one expect a word of familiarity, such as father, to be synonymous to an insult, especially coming from the mouth of your own son. "I wish I'd just died with S-Sirius than to be your son!"

Severus prided himself with being able to have a comeback or an answer to every remark thrown at him, but this time, there really was no appropriate answer that could satisfy any of them. For the first time in his life, Severus Snape had nothing to say, for his fears had come true; his son did not want him.

"Haeden..." a soft soothing voice came from the door, causing both Severus and Harry to turn to its direction.

Lily was standing by the doorway. She had heard the short conversation that transpired between Severus and Harry, and she couldn't help but cringe at the amount of anger that was in her son's voice. There were so many emotions in the emerald eyes that were staring wildly at her that all she wanted to do was walk up to her son and finally give him a hug they so longed for. But she knew that with Harry's current state of mind, such actions would not be received well. Therefore she just stood there, watching helplessly as her son pointed a wand to Severus' head.

"Haeden..." she repeated hoping to get through the boy.

"What did you just call me?" asked Harry, still looking in disbelief at his once-thought dead mother.

"Haeden." Lily took a tentative step forward. "You're real name is Haeden."

Harry had a faraway look on his face as if trying to sieve through his new memories for the truth behind his now living mother's words. Lily used this opportunity to step closer to Severus and the boy but before she could even make five steps, Harry had snapped out at whatever trance he had been in and faced his mother with a feral

look on his face. Lily took a hasty step back, almost tripping at her bad leg at the look on Harry's face.

"Don't you dare come any closer!" Harry all but growled at her.

"Haeden, please, I know you're angry at us, but child, this is not the way to solve anything," mollified Lily, pleading directly at her son through his eyes. She fought hard not to wince at the anger and hurt directed at her that she saw in her son's eyes. Deep down she knew she deserved much more for leaving him behind but Merlin it still hurt to see it in the flesh.

"I said don't come any closer!" cried Harry, turning his wand at Lily. But before anyone of them could comprehend what happened next, Severus had grabbed Harry's hand which had gone lax throughout his interaction with Lily and pulled him into an arm lock so fast, none of them saw it coming.

It was a good thing that Harry still did not know of the new abilities he'd gain after his Release or Severus would not have been able to hold the boy down, vampiric strength or not. An animalistic growl escaped from within Harry's throat as he tried to escape the dark haired man's surprisingly strong grip, kicking and flaying about.

Severus strengthened his hold on the boy when Harry started fighting back and hints of his own vampiric strength were surfacing. Severus turned towards his wife who was watching the scene with glazed eyes, "LILY!"

Lily whipped her sights away from her struggling son and onto her husband's darker ones, intensified further by the exertion of his powers. A silent understanding passed through them and Lily started towards her son once more, ignoring the glares and shouts that were directed at her.

His mother - was it really his mother? - was walking towards him with that sad look on her face. He snarled at her, not being able to help the incense he felt well up inside of him. She was standing so close to him now; he had never really seen his mother this close before, it was only in pictures that he'd see her face. She was whispering something to him but a sudden buzzing in his ears prevented him from hearing whatever it was she was saying. A hand was brought up in front of him and the darkness soon engulfed his

vision. He never even realized the tender hand that stroked his face or the soothing song that lulled him deeper and deeper into unconsciousness.

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The next time he opened his eyes, he found himself lying on the safe bed he'd been finding himself placed in for the past few days. He placed a hand on his head and was glad that it no longer pounded like it did before. Blinking away sleep in his eyes, he surveyed the room and was surprised to find that everything was back in its proper place once more, nothing was left to signify that just hours earlier it was a sea of destruction.

Then a memory was triggered in his mind, the memory of that fateful night fifteen years ago. It was Dumbledore; Dumbledore had been the one that attacked them that night in Godric's Hollow. It was Dumbledore, the very man who'd made him believe he was destined to kill Voldemort, who had ruined his life. He felt unadulterated rage surge through him, wanting to break every single limb on the old man for using him, for what he didn't know, but he would pay nonetheless.

Then there were his parents, his heart panged for them, but as of now, he couldn't find it in himself to forgive them. There was still so much to be said and he didn't know whether he could keep a civil tongue with them when the time came. He hated them for leaving him, hated them for living without him, hated them for allowing Dumbledore to use him, but most of all, he hated himself for hating them.

The animal that was a part of him growled in frustration, leaving him empty and hollow, freeing him even for a moment from the torrent of emotions that were threatening to overwhelm him. But then a sense of being watched pierced through him and his eyes snapped at a pair of large brown eyes that stood before the door.

"If Young Master is up, Master Severus and Mistress Lily would like your presence in the parlour," announce a weird looking house-elf.

Haeden stared at the unusual looking house-elf, completely forgetting what was said. It was unlike any of the house-elves he'd seen before. This one wore none of the degrading tea cosies the

others wore; instead, it wore a miniature black tailcoat with silver trimmings and a crest sewn on the upper left-hand corner. It was also half an inch taller than normal house-elves and if one were to ignore the pointed ears and large head, one could easily mistake the creature for a very short butler.

"What did you say?" asked Haeden, having caught himself staring at the house-elf.

"Master and Mistress Snape wishes for Trooker to tell Young Master that your presence is wanted in the parlour."

"Well you can tell them they can bloody screw it for all I care 'cause I'm not going anywhere near them!" snapped Haeden. "You hear me! I don't give a damn about what they want!"

"Then Young Master leaves Trooker with no choice." there was something in the house-elf's voice that made Haeden step back, he was definitely not going to like this house elf.

"What are you going to do?" cried Haeden, backing away from the house elf as it inched close to him.

"I apologise, Young Master, but Trooker must do what is asked of him. And Trooker knows Young Master needs to speak with his parents, 'tis not good to ignore everything and hope that it will all go away." Trooker was steadily making his way towards the scuttling boy

"Don't call me Young Master, I'm not your master and I ..." but before Haeden could get another word of protest from his mouth, the elf had grabbed him by his forearm and the sensation of being sucked into a tight piece of rubber told him he was being Apparated away.

Then as quick as the sensation came, it ended and it left him sprawled on all fours in a brightly lit room, dazed and out of breath. There was a short commotion on the other side of the room and then a long walking stick came before his view.

"Are you alright?" a gentle voice inquired. Haeden didn't know what to feel about having his mother stand in front of him with what sounded like concern in her voice, but he certainly wasn't going to

fall into any false sense of security, definitely not now when everything he thought he knew was a load of lies.

He pushed himself from his ludicrous position on the floor before moving a good few distance from his mother. He didn't bother replying to her question, merely looking defiantly at her. Lily saw how her son distanced himself from her and that small act of rejection gripped her. They had done so many wrongs to this child; she now had no idea how to patch things up.

"Haeden," she started, hoping to seek out her son only to be stopped by him.

"What do you want?" he demanded, his voice a forced flatness.

"Son, we just want to make sure if you were alright. After last night, we were worried." said Lily.

"We?" said Haeden incredulously.

"As in your father and I. We were worried about you."

"So Snape is really my father then?" asked Haeden, barely containing his emotions.

"Yes. Severus is your father. And please, I know you're mad but at least try to give him the respect he deserves." said Lily firmly.

"I'll be the judge on whether you both deserve my respect." Lily was at a lost at what to say. Had they misjudge so badly that their son could no longer forgive them? However there was one other person in the room who wasn't about to tolerate such things, even if he was currently at odds with his son.

"I don't ever want you to use that tone with your mother again." Severus Snape entered the parlour just in time to hear his son's comments.

Both Haeden and Lily turned towards his direction, a look of utter hatred etched on the youth's face. Severus tried not to show just how much that single look from his son pained him and walked grandly into the room.

"What of James Potter? Why were you with him if he was your husband?" Haeden turned to his mother, ignoring Severus who was standing right behind her.

"It needed to be done, Haeden, if you'd just let us explain to you everything..."

"Alright then, explain to me why you left me at the Dursleys when clearly you're alive and well. Explain to me why a mother would willingly leave her child behind and not even once come back to check on him! Tell me, explain to me! Explain to me how you could live and sleep at night knowing that your son is in the pits of HELL! Tell me!" Haeden's hands were shaking with the amount of rage and intensity he was releasing.

"I'm sorry, Haeden, I'm sorry..." Lily broke down in tears, weeping for the happiness she had snatched from her son.

"Haeden, please try to listen to your mother, it wasn't meant to end up like this. We never meant to leave you behind. Please, son, just hear us out." Severus said to his son, holding a tearful Lily in his arms.

"Shut up, Snape! Biologically you may be my father, but you have no right to tell me what to do. You, both of you, forfeited that right when you thought it was better to leave me at the Dursleys!" cried Haeden, turning to leave behind two crestfallen parents.

As he was about to find his way back to 'his room', he met up with Selene right outside the parlour. He was surprised to find her left arm in a sling and that her face and arms were filled with tiny scratches that he'd momentarily forgotten he was angry with her. He was about to open his mouth to speak to her when she snapped at him first.

"You're a bloody arse, you know that!" she said to him.

"What are you talking about?" countered Haeden.

"I told you, I told you before everything happened that not everything is as it seems. I thought I'd made that clear to you! Did you actually think it was easy for them to leave you behind? I told you they did what they did for a reason. It nearly killed mother to give you up.

And do you know why she walks with a walking stick? It's because she sacrificed herself for you that night in Godric's Hollow, draining all of her magic so that you may survive with your whole mind intact! So don't go screaming that they left you. I know it hurt but you aren't the only one who got hurt!"

Haeden stared flabbergasted at her before anger burned right through him again, "You're only saying that because you were able to grow up with parents! You don't know how it's like to have your whole life turned in on its head. I'd prefer that my parents had stayed dead than to know they're alive and well and are living well without me. At least then I could comfortably assure myself that they died for me because they loved me. So don't lecture me about not having the right to shout and scream at them. What kind of mother leaves her child to fend for himself? What kind of father knowingly treats his son horribly for five long years? They are not parents, Selene!"

"I don't care what war it is you're fighting, they could have taken me from the Dursleys and away from all that I had to go through because I thought I was avenging their deaths. But they didn't, because they already have you!"

Selene stepped back in shock at his last words, "Don't ever assume you know me or everything that they did because you have no idea. You have no idea..."

"Yes, I have no idea I admit. But you can't deny the fact that all those years they could have told me that they were alive. Is that too much to ask? They could have told me what their plans were; explained to me the dangers we were in. I'm not stupid. You say Snape's a vampire; then he could have used his abilities to contact me."

"But because of what they didn't do, I had to go through what an eight year child shouldn't be doing! Because of them I allowed myself to be used by Dumbledore in his schemes because I told myself that I was avenging their deaths. Do you know how it feels to be a little boy wondering why your relatives treat you differently and if someone out there would ever come and take you away? Do you know how it feels to not be able to be yourself, to always be at the beck and call of others, and be under the scrutiny of others who expect you to act a certain way? That is what they did to me,

Selene! So I tell to you as well, do not assume I have no right to feel this way, because I do have every right to be so!"

Selene watched as Haeden strode down the hall and up the stairs, power literally radiating off him. Her grey eyes trailed his steps until he had disappeared from her sight. She turned to her left soon after to find Severus standing by the doorway, a noticeable slouch in his usual stoic disposition. Their eyes meet and Selene could see that within the vast depth of her father's black eyes, he was struggling to keep his emotions under control. His lidded expression showed her just how much this entire thing weighed on all of them and her mother's heartfelt sobs reminded her so very much of her own tragic past.

One way or another they had to get through this, it would be hard but if they showed Haeden just how much he was loved and needed in their family, maybe, just maybe, not all was lost for them.

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It was by sheer happenstance that the first door that he opened turned out to be 'his room'. Inside he made a beeline for anything he could thrash. He was angry, he was hurt and he needed to do something or else he would go insane, and right now he didn't care whether he destroying something priceless or important, he just needed to do something.

He wanted to scream, scream of the horrors in his life. Scream of how people have manipulated him through the years. Scream for the life he could have had. And scream for them he did. His voice seem to travel throughout the house, pulsing through every door, alerting everyone in it of the deep pain he was feeling. He screamed until he could no longer scream, until blood seeped from his torn vocal cords. And then when energy finally drained off of him, he simply cried. Cried for the injustice that was his life.

A/N: There we go, pretty intense for a chapter. I told you it wasn't going to be pretty and it'll take time for Haeden's wounds to heal. He might have been inactive and buried in his own subconscious for years but he was still able to feel and remember everything that Harry went through. In the coming chapters, once the tension in the Snape household clears a bit, we'll get to see exactly how different Haeden is from Harry and his views on everything else.



I hope you liked the chapter and that it has satisfied your need for a little drama in your lives. You know what to do next, read and review and make this author extremely happy.

Til next post everyone...

dan4eva

## Chapter 15 Blood and Whatnots

Severus had never felt this scared his entire life, not even a mission for the Dark Lord ever made him this scared. Severus Snape, Prince of all Vampyres', Inner Circle member, Potions Master and spy prided himself of being able to handle any situation he was placed in; he was after all a man moulded by circumstances.

At a young age he had had to watch as a wizard hell bent of acquiring power, ravaged through his family's summer home. It was to be his first trip beyond the protection of their plane and he never did he imagine that it would end with him witnessing, from under his bed, petrified to the bone, the macabre that was his family's death. With no means of getting back to his own plane, Severus, then only seven years of age, fled the scene and wandered the unknown streets of the wizarding world, fighting his own instincts to feed on the next vulnerable mortal he saw. The next few months were to become his own personal hell. As a Vampyre youngling, he was not yet subjected to the blood rage that came with the lack of blood. However it was still very painful, the convulsions and fits he'd suffered were no picnic to his young and frail body. He would not have lived to be where he was now if not for a kindly witch who had stumbled upon him in a clearing in the woods.

To this day he wondered why that witch, despite what he was, nursed him back to health, cared for him and raised him as her own. He owed his second chance at life to Eileen Prince, his mortal mother. Eileen's family did not agree with her adopting a young Vampyre, especially with her being the only heir to her family's fortune. But she had seen something in him; perhaps it was the lack of innocence in his eyes, the robbed childhood, or the fact that he was different from what she was taught to know that she took him in. She protected him from her family's ridicule and he in turn came to respect her, loved her even like he loved his own mother.

By the time he was ten, the Princes had grudgingly resigned to the fact that a Vampyre was to be their heir. As it was, Pureblood wizarding families kept secrets only to themselves and it was probably a good thing that no one knew what the young Prince really was. But if he was to become their heir he had to learn their ways, thus manners were drilled into him until all he knew was to obey. Eileen Prince's father was a hardened man who loathed the very meaning of affection and Severus had learnt that any show of

emotion before the man that wasn't approved of was viewed as a weakness. It was Jeremiah Prince who instilled upon him utter obedience and that defiance was met with dire consequences.

There were plenty of times where he would hate himself for his weakness and fear of the elder Prince. For Salazar's sake, he was a Vampyre and Jeremiah was but a mere mortal! He could drink him dry if he wanted too. But he knew he could not do it. He was not the monster they cut him out to be and he owed it to Eileen, his protector. And for all things unjust, Jeremiah Prince knew this very well and used it to his own advantage; if he was to have a creature for an heir, then he would mould him to his every desire.

Severus' reprieve from Jeremiah Prince came when he turned eleven, which according to wizarding law, made him eligible to enrol at Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry, and it was here that his life finally changed. Whilst living with Eileen, he had never forgotten who and what he truly was, despite Jeremiah's teachings, and vowed that he would find the wizard who killed his family those many years ago and then perhaps, find a way back home, away from all the pain.

He met Lily in the train ride to Hogwarts and knew from the moment he laid eyes on her that she was different. He did not know then what was different about her, but he had a gut feeling that somehow they were alike. He befriended her even though she would later be sorted into Gryffindor and he into Slytherin. Their friendship flourished wonderfully and had soon gained insight into their lives. But there was one person who was extremely opposed to their growing friendship. Though he did not openly show it, the Headmaster was strictly against Severus Snape befriending Lily Evans. He would create situations where it would be impossible for them to meet, shove Potter and his gang towards Lily in the hopes that she would befriend them instead.

For a time Severus thought the Headmaster had succeeded with his plans when Lily started to resent and shun him. She had even gone to date his sworn enemy, Potter. Eileen had died the year before from some incurable illness, leaving him in the hands of her tyrannical father and it crushed poor Severus that after he'd found his only solace in his friend, she too had been forcefully taken away from him. But he fought through it, he was determined not to lose another person he held dear to the hands of wizards and he tried to

figure out what the Headmaster had done to cause the sudden rift between them.

Severus searched and searched for the reason behind the Headmaster's actions; for he knew it had to be the Headmaster, because he knew it had to be more than petty House rivalries that the Headmaster wanted them apart. No, Severus knew that Lily was somehow special, he'd felt that from the very start, and that the Headmaster knew it and was somehow using her to get what he wanted.

His theories were proven genuine when during their third year; Lily had sought him out and cornered him towards an empty classroom down in the dungeons. It was the first time he'd seen her up close since their falling out and she was deeply stricken and looked extremely pale as if she had not seen daylight for a long time. To say that he was shocked to see her like a walking skeleton was an understatement. Her face contorted in pain with every move she made and she spoke so incoherently that Severus barely understood her.

He did not understand how his friend could look perfectly healthy one minute and severely tortured the next. It wasn't until he finally understood what she was trying to tell him that he realized just how deep a mess they were in.

"S...S...Sev..." Lily pronounced with great difficulty, groping helplessly at Severus' robes.

"Lily, Lily, what is it? What's wrong? Why do you look like this?" said Severus, helping to keep his friend on her feet.

"Help me..." she hissed close to his ear.

"Help you? With what? Lily, you've got to tell me what's wrong. What is it? Who did this to you?" asked Severus desperately.

"D... Dum...ble...d..." her face shone with sweat and her knuckles chalk white in their grip of his robes as she exerted more energy into fighting whatever it was she was struggling with.

"Dumbledore? Did Dumbledore do this to you?" demanded Severus strongly, shaking his friend.

It happened instantaneously; Severus never thought it possible if he hadn't seen it for himself. Lily's once sickly pallor immediately smoothened out, leaving her only with a tinge of green in her cheeks, and then her countenance changed. She was eyeing him murderously and Severus had to back away quickly at the sudden shift in his friend.

"Back away Snape, you don't know what you're dealing with," she growled viciously at him before walking out of the room. Any signs of her earlier struggles slowly faded away and Severus was left alone in the dark room, rooted in shock, pondering what evil their esteemed Headmaster had done to his friend.

After that Lily never tried to contact him again and had somehow become even more distant with him. By then Severus was certain that the Headmaster was not all he cut out to be and that he was up to something and that he, Severus, would be damned if he would allowed his friend to remain a victim of the old man any longer.

However, Severus also knew that he could not approach his friend without the Headmaster finding out; he had to go about it all slowly and use every ounce of cunning he knew. Therefore during the summer before his fourth year he approached the only person he knew could help him get his friend from Dumbledore's grasps, he sought out the Dark Lord Voldemort. He was scared at first, he had heard of the Dark Lord and his powers but he'd also heard that the Dark Lord wanted nothing more than to destroy Albus Dumbledore.

But it had not been easy as the Dark Lord was paranoid of spies and Severus, a Hogwarts student, looked very much the part he was paranoid of. He'd endured days of torture under the Dark Lord's men before he was even allowed an audience with the feared wizard. But to his great surprise, the Dark Lord knew exactly the reason why he had come to seek him. It was in that one meeting that Severus Snape was enlightened of the schemes the leader of the Light was performing right under their noses.

He found out that Lily was in fact not a wizard, like him, but a descendant of one of the most powerful warlock the world had ever seen, Gellert Grindenwald. After Grindenwald's defeat in 1945, his family hid in fear that Dumbledore would come after them next and finish what he had started. But most importantly, he'd found out who,

after so many years, the wizard who had murdered his family and left him in the hands of Jeremiah Prince – Albus Dumbledore! – The high and mighty defender of the Light. He was not surprised at the revelation, he'd long suspected that the Headmaster was more sinister than he let out to be, it just gave him more incentive to destroy the wizened man.

For the remaining length of the summer, the Dark Lord placed Severus under his wing, teaching him all needed to learn about his kind and the world he had been separated from for so long. With the help of the Dark Lord, he was able to fully embrace his identity, something Jeremiah Prince had been trying to 'cleanse' him of – like vampyrism was something a mortal could 'cleanse'! And together they hatched plans to remove Lily from the control of the Headmaster.

It took a year's worth of failed plans and minor triumphs on the part of both Severus and the Dark Lord before they were able to free Lily from the old man's control. Her mind had been brutally assaulted by the Headmaster in the hopes that he could get her to do whatever he wanted her to do and to have full control of the Magyck she possessed in great quantities as the great granddaughter of a powerful Warlock that by the time they were able to free her, she was severely weakened, both physically and mentally. However, their rescue of her mind was aided greatly by the fortunate fact that Dumbledore had waited too long to put her under his control and that she had, prior to his meddling, already been influenced by forces beyond the old man's control.

After that it was obvious to all that Lily Evans, was not the Gryffindor the Headmaster had made her to be. But since only she and Severus knew what their 'mentor' was capable of, their actions all had to be carefully executed and done in absolute secrecy as Dumbledore now knew where the both of them stood in his grand scheme. Try as they may to tell the public of the Headmaster's actions, they knew it would not help; for they were after all of a different kind, quite unlike them.

Neither of them survived their final years at Hogwarts without having to play numerous deadly games of chess with the Headmaster, wherein they were the pawns and the Dumbledore the ever powerful king. Both Severus and Lily thrived under the wing of Lord Voldemort and pretty soon both of them had come into their full

abilities, Magick that was greater than anything the wizard kind had ever seen. But even with all that they had, Dumbledore's defeat was still elusive and the capture of the Dark Lord's most powerful followers was thought to be the end of the war for the Dark and its band of Clandestines.

Severus and Lily were both captured during a battle in London and instead of finishing off the two people who could ruin his plans, Dumbledore kept them alive, though he did so by threatening to kill the other if they did not work for him. Severus by then had seen enough of his loved ones killed in the hands of Dumbledore and to see his Lily suffer the same fate was enough for him to surrender himself to the old man.

Lily was more resistant but in the end she too was taken by the cruel Headmaster. She was forced to break all contact with the Dark and marry Potter, and succumb to their power. However when it came to be known that Lily had given birth to a son, Severus knew it was time for them to stop playing Dumbledore's games. They devised a plan for Lily and her son to escape Potter but it seemed fate had other plans. Lily barely survived that night and Severus had blamed himself constantly for the tragedy that had befallen their child and he was certain that had he not been able to save Lily, he would have damned all the rules that came with being a Vampyre and turned into the monster Jeremiah Prince thought him to be and swore to himself he would never become.

And here they were now, ruing the mistakes they had made.

So as Severus stood by his son's door, the memories of their unkindly past clearer than it had ever been in his mind for years, he had never been so scared. There was a Muggle saying that stated 'your mistakes would come to haunt you in the end' and they had a lot of mistakes to be haunted with. One of which was a childe, so horribly wronged and treated; receiver of all things they had failed to accomplish. Severus Snape had the right to be scared.

Two days had passed since the last time Haeden showed himself to his family and it was starting to worry them. At first they thought that if they allowed him to have time to get sorted out, he would be rational enough to hear them out. But when it looked liked Haeden would not come out of his room anytime soon, they knew they had to do something.

Severus drew a deep breath and then released it slowly through his nose, soothing out his nerves in the process; it did not do well for him too lose his control at his son at this crucial point in either reconciliation. He knocked sharply at the door, careful not to tip the goblet filled with red liquid in his other hand.

"Haeden, open this door!" he said collectedly. No one answered and Severus pressed his ears closer to the door to try and hear what was going on inside the sealed door. They would have tried earlier to just spell the door open but Haeden had somehow sealed it completely, preventing anyone but him to open it up. Even without his heightened senses, he would have heard the rasped breathing coming from within the room.

"Haeden, open this door now!" He had abandoned all pretences and rapped at the door like a mad man. "Idiot childe, you need to drink! Open the door, Haeden!"

His stern tones and insistent knocking had alerted everyone in the manor and he only managed to get a glimpse of his wife and daughter striding towards him before he raised his empty hand and a blast of bluish light flew at the door. The door glowed brightly and Severus thought he had finally undone his son's spell but when he went to turn the knob, he received a jolt of energy instead, sending the goblet of blood spilling on the carpeted floor.

Severus hissed in pain and cursed loudly, "Haeden!"

"Childe, please open the door," Lily tried once she had reached the locked door, Selene standing nervously beside her.

"Leave me alone," Severus and Lily stilled at once as they heard a faint voice from inside the room.

"Haeden listen to me," implored Severus, "You are dehydrated from lack of blood, you need to drink now or else this will turn into a blood rage."

"I said leave me alone," they heard Haeden say in clipped tones, though the sharp intake of breath in between words lost its effect.



Lily pushed Severus aside and placed herself directly in front of the door, her face flat on the wood. "Haeden, son, please don't do this, open the door. We are only trying to help."

"Listen to yourself childe, your breathing is laboured enough as it is!" cried Severus causing his wife to turn abruptly and glare at him.

"Haeden, please, let us in son," pleaded Lily. It wasn't immediate, but when Severus was all prepared to try to unleash his strength into blasting the door open once more, there was a loud click and the door swung open an inch.

It took a few seconds before the three of them realized that the door had opened but when they did they quickly entered the room and were immediately plunged into darkness.

"Haeden?" Lily called out into the dark. It was midday but the thick drapes covering the window shielded the room from the rays of the sun. A moan sounded from somewhere further into the room the moment Lily conjured a ball of light to illuminate the dark room.

Lily and Severus both moved towards the weak sound and found Haeden curled beneath the desk, his expression pained and feral. Selene had stayed behind Severus' protection while Lily crouched down to her son's level and reached out a hand to touch him only to have it pulled by a larger hand.

"It's starting." said Severus in a whisper, not taking his eyes of the boy. If Haeden had not looked like an average creature before, he was now every much the picture of the feared creature wizards depict Vampyres to be. He was chalk white, a stark contrast to the dark room, his face appeared gaunt and his eyes were no longer the bright emerald they used to be, instead they were dilated and black, the dark circles around them making them look much more hollowed. However the feature on his gaunt expression that would frighten the most were the long white fangs that were protruding from his mouth, giving him an all together ravenous look; something all Vampyres avoid becoming.

"He needs to drink blood now," Severus had his hand in front of Lily and was shielding her from the hungry look on his son's face. As Vampyres got older they're able to survive longer without having to hunt, sustaining themselves by drinking their own blood. But as

Haeden had never had the chance to drink before now, his body's resistance was none existent and it would take months to get his blood levels up to normal levels. A thirsty Vampyre was rare and ever rarer is a Vampyre not quenching its thirst. But nonetheless they were not someone you would want in a room as the pain brought on by the thirst makes them forget every rule that govern their very existence and attack even their closest relative. And as it constituted to death in Vampyric laws for a Vampyre to attack another Vampyre, they usually try their best not to deprive themselves from the life giving liquid.

Severus took tentative steps towards the boy; he knew exactly what the boy was going through, having lived through the same thing during those hellish months in the woods before Eileen had come to save him. He conjured a fresh goblet of blood and offered it to the growling childe. Haeden's head quickly turned at the fresh scent of blood and his lips curled outwards, fangs bared dangerously and his eyes flashing scarlet in hunger. But before Severus could even hand over the goblet to the boy, Haeden had released an ear splitting scream and his whole body started convulsing.

"Shite!" exclaimed Severus, passing the goblet to Lily in favour of helping his son get control of his body. "Selene, grab hold of his legs!"

Selene scrambled from across the room to get to her father but no sooner had she got a hold of the thrashing legs, Haeden lurched forward and had it not been for the older Vampyre's lightning face reflexes, Selene would have found herself on the fang end of a raging Vampyre. Selene recoiled at the sudden attack but as soon as Severus had Haeden pinned securely on the ground once more, she took hold of the legs and Lily immediately cast a binding spell to restrain the boy. He was still writhing and thrashing about but at least he could no longer cause himself and others harm.

"Bite," ordered Severus, picking up the boy's flimsy hand and placing it near his mouth, and for a second as he said this, Haeden emerged through the pain and glared incredulously at him.

"You need to circulate your blood before you get lost in the thirst," At Haeden's still defiant look, Severus let fall the remains of his stoic mask and pleaded. "Please childe, you need to drink. You do not

want to turn into something you're not. Please son, drink and I promise the pain will stop."

Haeden watched, through pain glazed eyes, the sincerity in the older man's obsidian eyes and he wanted desperately to believe his words. But he was still reluctant to give up hold of his body, for he knew that once he gave into the thirst, he would forever be changed, he would no longer be Harry, not that he ever did like being Harry, but still, it had been his life; all that he had known. And now he was heading towards a path he knew he could never turn back on. Whatever it was that was going to happen, it would be unconditionally irrevocable, a permanence. But did he truly want that? Turn his back on everything he thought he knew and face reality, no matter how frightening its concept maybe?

The cramping of his stomach intensified, sending his body into another fit of convulsions. The fire in his throat was excruciating, and the scent of blood he knew to be close by was driving his senses into overdrive. He could see himself now, a monster grinning dangerously in his mind's eye, blood dripping ominously from his venomous fangs.

He knew it wouldn't be long until he got lose in the pain and in the process, lose control of himself completely. He stared at the hand placed tentatively near his mouth; just a bite and the pain would go away he had said. Was it really that easy? Didn't Vampyres have to consume pints of blood to quench their thirsty? And he was feeling very very thirsty, like he had been parched his entire life. Would biting at his own hand bring about the end of his pain?

Haeden emitted yet another piercing scream, this time his eyes had completely turned red, the exact colour of blood, and his lips curled, exposing more of his lethal fangs. It wouldn't take long now before the rage took over and he would be lose to all of them, blinded by the pain and driven by the need to feed, ignoring everything that had been set firm to protect them from their very own needs. Haeden growled dangerously, Severus stared hard at his son's wracking body; he was going to be damned if he let things end this way.

Severus wandlessly conjured a small dagger and pulled his son's pale arm towards him. But before he could produce the slit that would save his son from the pain and agony, a slender hand had

grabbed his and he looked up to find two wide eyed Clandestines staring at him.

"Severus, what on earth are you doing?" exclaimed a hysteric Lily, her hand firmly holding his hand with the dagger.

"It's the only way Lils. He cannot save himself. We cannot lose him like this. Lily trust me." said Severus, trying to convey the importance of his actions to his terrified wife.

Lily stared warily at the dagger and at her sick son. Pain washed over her beautiful face and silently cursed all those who had made them suffer. She slowly released the dagger and stepped backwards, allowing the two Vampyres to care for her son, praying that they would all be forgiven by the frail boy.

"Trust me, Lily," said Severus firmly, albeit croakily. Lily nodded and closed her eyes, hands placed close to her chest in silent prayer, the perfect statue of an angel.

Severus turned his attention back to the problem at hand and nodded at his equally frightened daughter before taking the dagger in his hand and used it to cut across his son's wrist. If his son did not intend to bite himself, then he would at least try to get some blood in him. He took the profusely bleeding wrist and placed it directly above his son's mouth. The effect was immediate. Haeden's body had stopped convulsing and his tongue was quickly lapping at the blood that dripped into his open mouth. Severus lowered the hand directly into the mouth, the boy's fangs quickly securing it into the mouth, allowing him to drink on his own.

A huge sigh of relief was heard from the three Clandestines in the room. Severus released the breath he didn't know he had been holding and swept towards the couch where his wife had collapsed in. He wrapped his arms around her tense body and slowly ran his hand back and forth, easing the tension that had build-up in her. Lily sagged into her husband's embrace and stared in relief that their son had pulled through yet again. As soon as his blood had completely circulated through out his body, and gotten use to the liquid, he would be strong enough that they could stop him from drinking his own blood.

Selene stayed on the floor and watched as Haeden's face now looked content. He was still thirstily sucking his own blood but at least he no longer looked as if he were being burnt alive. In her entire life as a Vampyre, she had never seen a Vampyre raging before and she did not want to see it ever again. She had heard whispers from the older Vampyres in the Clandestine Plane what a blood rage was and it was only to this day that she fully understood why Vampyres would rather die than to lose control like her brother had only minutes ago.

'Her brother' she thought in surprise. She hadn't really seen until now just how young Haeden truly was. Sure she was only a few years older than the boy, but with the way things were, it seemed that she was much, much older than their two year age gap. Her hand shook and automatically grasped the chain that hung around her neck and knew that the tables had unknowingly turned on her. She knew she could no longer live in the past and forever be the little girl hiding in her brother's robes. Things were different, she knew it. But could she truly accept that he could never protect her again? That she was truly alone?

No, she thought. She was not alone, she had Severus and Lily. And it seemed that she had Haeden as well. Her brother? Maybe, if she could get herself to forget. But then who was there to protect her now? She was being selfish, she knew that already. But could she truly let go of her fears and insecurities and stop hiding behind a past that had long been taken? Could she, with the knowledge that someone younger needed her, jump into a role she thought she would never place herself in?

Maybe, for her brother.

The term sounded rusty, like it had been a long time since it had been last used. But she felt it was right. And she knew it was right. Her gripped tightened around the pendant that hung in her chain; she owned it to him at least.

"Toby," she whispered softly, staring at the now calm Vampyre on the floor. She would try.

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Haeden blinked, the haze of sleep slowly lifting. He tried to move but found that his body felt extremely stiff, as if he'd been battered repeatedly by Bludgers. He moaned at the feeling.

"Mother and father just left. They'd been watching you the whole night." He turned too fast for his stiff body and knew that he would pay for it later and found Selene sitting pensively on the chair beside his bed.

"I didn't ask," Haeden growled at the girl.

"You ought to know." said Selene, determined

Haeden glowered, pushing himself with difficulty into a sitting position. Selene got up from her chair and helped the boy into a comfortable position, clearly ignoring the frown directed at her assistance. Once Haeden had settled into a better sitting position and Selene had once more returned to her seat, the dark haired boy spoke.

"What happened? Why am I so stiff?"

"You suffered from a blood rage," said Selene, looking deep in thought. She examined the propped up boy and was pleased that even though he was still paler than normal, a tinge of colour was finally returning to his skin. Even his eyes had lost their scarlet colouring, returning into a more recognizable darker shade of green. He still needed to drink, his stiff movements indicated that pretty much, but at least he was no longer in the risk of losing himself. A few more hours and he would be fine, thought Selene.

Haeden's brows furrowed at the unfamiliar term. "You were in desperate need of blood," explained Selene. He didn't know whether to be disgusted or nonchalant at the thought, therefore he took a deep breath to relax his nerves. The array of scent that assaulted him in that one single breath of air surprised him like nothing else. It made his head feel extremely light headed and for his throat to burn intently with desire.

Selene sniggered at the socked up expression on Haeden's face, "You shouldn't have done that."

"What just happened?" asked Haeden, staring at the grey eyed beauty.

"Heightened senses. One of the few quirks of being a Vampyre," she said with an amused grin. Then from out of nowhere, she pulled out a large goblet filled with sloshing dark liquid. As soon as the goblet appeared, the fire in Haeden's throat intensified, sending his head reeling and his lips curled to reveal a pair of gleaming fangs. He felt a strong desire over take him, empowering his senses, releasing a low growl from behind his throat.

Selene handed over the goblet to the younger Vampyre and watched as he downed the large goblet in one gulp, satisfaction flashing clearly in his eyes. Haeden licked the goblet clean of the liquid before returning it to the ever watchful girl, a cocked up smile on his face.

"Feel better?" asked Selene, resisting the urge to roll her eyes at his silly expression.

Haeden nodded contently, sliding lower into the large folds of the bed. He could still feel the thick warm liquid flowing down his throat and closed his eyes, enjoying the ecstasy it brought him. He guessed that this must be what addicts felt when they were high and he smiled once more. The silence that passed before them was the most comfortable they'd ever had, both having no qualms into enjoying it.

It was awhile before Haeden opened his eyes once again and asked a question that had been bugging him since he woke up. "Are you a vampire too?"

Selene frowned at both the term used and the timidity of the voice. But she nonetheless knew what he'd been trying to say. "Isn't it obvious?"

Haeden turned to look at the girl who had remained surprisingly quite until now, usually she had a comment thrown at him every now and then, and examined her physical appearance. She still had the same long dark hair and lovely cream coloured skin he remembered seeing during his first night at the manor, and her eyes were still the smoky grey he remembered. If he'd seen her walking down the

street, he never would have guessed that she was a thirsty blood sucker he'd only seen in Muggle films.

He shook his head, "No, not really. I'd expected you to be... eh... paler."

Selene laughed loudly. "Well look at yourself! You're as pale as the sheets!" Haeden looked at his arms and turned them over – he was indeed pale! He turned back to the girl in question.

"It will pass once your blood levels go up. But did you really think all Vampyres were ghostly white, skeletal and feral looking?" she said in question.

"I've seen pictures of vampires at Hogwarts and they don't look like you at all. They look more like Snape." said Haeden, looking slightly put-off at Selene's amused face.

"Yeah, well he's always been different from the rest of us." said Selene, referring to the older Vampyre. "But most of our kind look just like your average person, just with more Magyck of course. We are very difficult to spot in a crowd of Muggles and wizards, I'm pretty sure you've realized that, unless of course you know what you're looking for. Those pale creatures in wizarding text are a lowly depiction of what we truly are."

"So you mean there are two kinds of vampires?" asked Haeden, his brows pulled together in confusion.

"Not really," said Selene with a frown. "Didn't Severus tell you the story on why our kind is in hiding?"

Haeden nodded, "Something about a power insurgence."

"Yes. Well those – creatures – in the wizarding world were once just like us, powerful and not restricted by anything. But because they followed the rebellion, the Council stripped them of their abilities, leaving only the most basic abilities and exiled them from the plane. They, alone with a few others, are the only ones who know the truth. They are still immortal, but that is part of their punishment, to eternally walk the earth with the knowledge that they possess less than one tenth of their previous abilities."



"It's best not to get them confused with Vampyres. It's a great insult to us to be called like them." said Selene. "We are Vampyres, superior and Clandestine. They are vampires, eternally repentant and weak."

Haeden took in the information like a wet sponge, processing it in his befuddled mind and an image of himself jumped from the back of mind, standing tall and proud, his fangs bared, and his pale arms holding up a lifeless body. He shivered at the image, but instead of feeling fear and disgust at himself, he felt freed. It was an unsettling thought. But the more he looked into the image his mind was showing him, he discovered that the irrational fear he felt was not that he was now this terrifying creature, but that he was once a feeble youth, robbed and maligned, helpless to even save himself from the imprisonment he was unjustly thrown in.

"What are you thinking of?" asked Selene, not liking the distant look on Haeden's face.

Haeden tore himself from the disturbing image in his mind and turned to look at the other Vampyre beside him. She indeed looked nothing like the vampires wizards and Muggles speak of, even now the image in his mind didn't look quite as feral as he'd first envisioned vampires to be like. "I'm different now." he said softly.

Selene's perfectly carved brows came together in confusion, "You're still you Haeden, nothing's changed. This is who you truly are, not the other way around."

Haeden shook his head absentmindedly; the same distant look still on his face, "I mean I'm stronger now, am I not? More powerful, more intimidating. I no longer am the same weak person who allowed himself to be used and manipulated." He turned to look at Selene, a dangerous edge to his dark green eyes, "I'm different, and I can taste it."

Selene watched the acute acceptance show on the dark haired boy's pale face. If truth be told, she'd expected him to throw into another fit of rage like he had a few days, vehemently screaming at the top of his lungs what he had become. But it seemed that she had misjudged Haeden. She could see it in his eyes, the struggle with his past and the hard acceptance that much more had been

taken from him and that he'd chosen to walk a path few would ever walk in.

"You're taking this better than I'd expected," said Selene with a smirk, breaking through Haeden's stupor. "After the last time you were left to your own devices, I expected another blatant display of rebellion."

Haeden stared at her. "I'm tired." He said flatly.

"I'm sure you are," acknowledged Selene, getting up from her seat with the grace of a seasoned dancer.

"Are you leaving?" said Haeden, with something akin to disappointment in his voice, Selene couldn't tell.

"You need your rest. You're not well yet. Trooker will come later on with a fresh goblet of blood." said Selene.

"Will you be back?" asked Haeden in a small voice. The request momentarily shook Selene speechless, but once she'd gotten a grip on herself, she spoke tentatively.

"Do you want me to?"

"Please, I need someone to help me with this." Haeden ran his arms before himself, indicating what he was trying to say.

"I'll speak to Father, he knows better than I do," Selene suggested.

"I don't want Snape!" snapped Haeden angrily. "Please, Selene..."

There it was again, the helplessness in his voice. Selene cringed inwardly at the sound. She was about to say no; that he needed to sort out his problems with their parents, but her mouth had other ideas it seemed.

"Alright," The huge grin on Haeden's face deterred any plans for her to take back what she had hastily said.

A/N: next chap won't be out til my arm heals... sorry... just read and enjoy my other stories for the time being...

Til next post...

dan4eva

## Chapter 16 An Interlude

In the week that passed after Haeden awoke from his blood rage, he'd finally been able to explore the manor he was residing in. He found that his room was one of many that could be found in the turn-of-the-century stone manor, it was located in the eastern wing of the manor and faced the vast woods that surprisingly still belonged to the manor's perimeter. Outside, into the halls of the manor, most of the walls were either panelled with dark wood or left bare, its stone walls covered only by large draping tapestries depicting magical sceneries Haeden thought could never exist and portraits of various people, some of which he was glad he would never have to meet. In contrast to the homey feel most of the manor held, there were some parts of the manor that just gave an all together austere feeling, mostly the lower levels, but he guessed that was to be expected for a manor of this size.

A beautiful cherry wood grand staircase greeted anyone who entered through the pillared entrance hall. But the most magnificent thing about the entrance hall was its high ceiling that went up through all the three floors of the manor. It had both the carvings and the paintings of creatures Haeden had never seen before and hope to see in the future, for there was just something powerful pulling him towards them. He had only briefly seen pictures of the Sistine ceiling during his primary school days, but he was sure that this artwork would shame even Michelangelo himself. A large burgundy carpet ran from the door and trailed all the way up to the large stained-glass window that made up the entire back wall of second floor landing. Haeden was certain that during midday, the entrance hall provided a wonderful spectacle of colours that refracted from the stained glass; a light show to further emphasize the beauty and grandeur of the room.

Off to the right was the sitting area Haeden remembered being taken to by the house elf to meet his parents for the first time. He hadn't noticed then how this room contrasted greatly with the many parts of the manor. Sure the entrance hall was grand and breathtaking, but Haeden could still feel that behind all the beauty it showed, there was an underlying darkness to it, like it was both trying to warn and warm its guest to what mysteries that lay ahead. However the sitting room was void of all those, it was light and airy, filled with comfortable couches, and bookshelves lined the walls that weren't either covered by portraits or windows. It had made Haeden

think for awhile how it would be like growing up in his living room and its familiar aura before shaking his head and frowning. It made it all the much more painful when he caught sight of a family portrait that hung just above the mantelpiece, clearly missing a certain family member. He barely contained his anguish as he dashed back to the confines of his dark room.

Aside from the room he was staying in, Haeden had only gone willingly into one other room in the manor, the dinning room. It was still a surprise to him when, on the night after his apparent blood rage, the unusual looking house elf, he now knew by the name of Trooker, appeared into his room and announced to him that dinner was ready. Being new to the world of Vampyres, he didn't know what to expect on that night, but platters among platters of food was not what he had expected. It seemed that his kind of Vampyres dieted on much more than fresh blood. The large rectangular wooden table had held plates of roast lamb, grilled pork and even honeyed ham, however it was obvious what the red liquid was that was contained in the goblets.

"I'm glad you could join us, Haeden." said a deep voice from the head of the table. It was only at the voice that Haeden was made aware that there were already people in the dinning room. Snape sat at the head of the table, a calm and inviting expression on his face, Lily sat to his right, her face glowing with happiness at the sight of her son, while Selene sat rigidly to the left of the red haired warlock.

Haeden tried not to look at the hurt in his mother's eyes as he took a seat furthest from them. He heard someone sigh deeply but didn't bother to turn to see who it was. He was going to try his hand at being civil with 'his parents', and he knew that his resolve would break if he actually looked at them and see the regret and sadness in their eyes; he would surely break then.

"I'm sure you're pretty surprise to find that other than drinking blood, you can actually still eat meat," said Lily, trying to make light conversation, hoping to drop the tension in the room.

Haeden nodded stiffly, as long as he was here, he might as well ease his curiosity and the topic was safe enough for him to discuss. He just hoped they didn't expect him to reply with more than a few words.

Encouraged by the small show of acknowledgement from her son, Lily went on. "You can still pretty much do everything you once did when you were a wizard, like eat and go outside. Being a Vampyre does not restrict you from anything. Well perhaps eating your greens is now out of the question."

From out of the corner of his eyes, Haeden could see that his mother was smiling at him and he finally realized that indeed she was the only one actually eating the little vegetables that was served on the table. He hadn't realized then the relief that rushed through him at that revelation. It brought the much needed hope back into his chest; perhaps this wouldn't be so bad after all. Not having to eat vegetable was much better than the thoughts that had run through his head about what he now could not do as a Vampyre. Also, despite his earlier reservations at eating the slab of steak before him, he found it extremely to his liking. It of course tasted different to his Vampyric palate compared to when he was human, probably due to the fact that it was barely cooked and tasted strongly of warm blood, but he guessed that was to be expected now.

The rest of the meal passed by in the same terse note with Haeden barely nodding and mumbling a reply to the questions thrown at him by Lily. His mother was trying so hard to get him to open up that he felt she was trying to unclench his jaw with a crowbar and fought hard the urge to want to bolt out of the uncomfortable situation. He wanted to look at her face, to see the smile that had been, for the last fifteen years, a mere fantasy, but the pain was too great and the anger he felt welling up inside of him prevented him from reconciling with his mother.

However Severus Snape was another matter all together. He had spoken only a few words throughout the meal and every time he did so, Haeden wanted nothing more than to snap at his face. The man maybe his father, but years worth of deride and ridicule were difficult to erase by mere familiarity. He knew he should not be blaming the man for everything that had happened to him in the past, but as of now, he desperately wanted someone to vent his anger on and Snape was proving to be the perfect candidate.

When the end of the meal finally came, Haeden was the first to rise and excused himself from the table. He didn't bother waiting for a reply as he strode off the room.

He never did attend the following nights and his parents made good into stirring clear off of his way.

Haeden had to admit that despite the palpable tension within the manor between him and his parents, he was actually enjoying his stay. For the first time, as far as he could remember, he was free, in more sense than one and he found his refuge by the pristine lake located on the southern border of the manor. It was both far enough from the manor yet still being within its protective perimeter. Selene had warned him, prior to his exploration of the grounds, that the entire estate was located in-between-planes and that it was dangerous to cross the boundaries without first seeking approval from the Court.

He'd learnt enough from the aloof female Vampyre's explanations to know that the Royal Court was the shifting body that governed the whole of the Clandestine Plane, second only to the omniscient Shadow Council. They were a circle of Kings and Queens from the different beings in the Clandestine Plane who, for more than a thousand years, swore to keep the peace within the plane and ensure that the many voices in their world could be heard, unlike that of the wizarding world.

They impose strict rules when it came to the safety of the many seeking haven in their plane and that entry to the said plane was borderline impossible without the knowledge of the Court. For millennia they've kept their existence a secret from the rest of the wizarding world for fear that they would once again be tempted by the great power they possess. It was not in the nature of Clandestines to use their abilities to harm other magical beings, even those of more predatory instincts like the Vampyres and Moon Walkers, but the lingering threat the larger wizarding world held was forcing their hands into things they'd rather not do. The imminent threat of Dumbledore had forced them to tighten their hold of the gateways, sending the plane deeper into the folds of Magyck that first crafted its existence, causing the few families still beyond its protection to fight for itself. It was this, according to Selene that was making Clandestines, like them, easy prey to Dumbledore's twisted ideals. Yet for the safety of the Plane and those within it, there was nothing else they could do.

Haeden picked up a rock with a particularly smooth edge and skimmed it across the water's surface, watching the ripples it made,

trying to assess all he'd found out in the few days after his Release. It was overwhelming how much all of it went against his knowledge and beliefs. To think that the man he'd viewed as his mentor was actually the very man who took his chance at having a family, the one who had manipulated him into thinking that he was their saviour when in fact he was no more a tool for the old man and his twisted lies. The one who robbed him of his true identity! A dark cloud hovered over his thoughts, bringing about once more the memory of this morning, the reason why he'd sought the tranquillity of the lake and the woods.

From here he had a wonderful view of the stone manor which stood atop a hill, its imposing stature the only one to be seen from miles around. The flagged driveway led away from the manor and into the woods. As far as he could see, there was no gate or fence surrounding the estate, it was as if the woods itself offered as a deterrent to wandering vagrants. Even from a distance, one couldn't help but feel intimidated at the sight of the stone walls and high windows. There was a sense of foreboding about its mass that sent shivers momentarily down his spine; a huge contrast to the surprising warmth its interior held.

Though the thick rivets of greenery and flowers covering the stone walls gave colour to the otherwise dark building, it did nothing to ease its formidable air, simply stirring in more mystery into its foundation. Yet despite all its severity, the tranquillity of its surroundings, the lush garden, the pristine lake and its earthy woods gave the great stone manor a security to it that Haeden could not explain.

"Did you not believe me when I told you that we can go out in the sun without being burnt to death?" The mocking voice made Haeden turn at once, breaking his silent contemplation, a frown slowly forming on his face.

The last he'd seen the girl was during their nightly conversations wherein he would barrage her with questions and she in turn dripped out information in such scarcity he felt like he was wringing a dried shrivelled fig. Ever since he'd come out of his blood rage, she'd starting acting so detached towards him that he was surprised she was actually approaching him now, alone, with the playful air he'd once associated with her in the beginning.



"Because I can assure you that that's a ridiculous myth when it comes to real Vampyres." said Selene when Haeden remained silent.

The young Vampyre stared at the lovely brunette, a snarky comment half-formed in his mind but decided not to voice it out and turned his gaze back towards the blue expanse of the lake and flung another rock at the water, disturbing the glassy surface. "Can I ask you something?" he asked once he'd gathered up all of his thoughts.

"You may. But I want to tell you something first." replied Selene, taking a few steps towards the boy. Haeden turned to look at her again and stared at her as if trying to decipher what she was about to say. He nodded.

Selene stared at the troubled green eyes, wondering what effect her words would have on the boy. "Severus and Lily," she began only to receive a sneer from the subdued boy. But before she could have another word on the subject, Haeden had walked passed her in a flurry of black and white.

"Haeden, wait!" called out Selene, walking up to him.

"Give it a rest, Selene. I don't want to talk about them!" cried Haeden over his shoulder.

"Well you've got to!" cried Selene in the same irritated voice.

Haeden wheeled around to face the persistent Vampyre, an angry look upon his face. He stopped so abruptly that Selene had to scramble to stop herself before colliding with the boy.

"Why?" demanded Haeden angrily.

"Because." said Selene justly. "Because you asked me to help you, that's why!"

Haeden's eyes flashed briefly, "I didn't ask you to help me with this." He strode off once more, quickening his steps but Selene kept up quite easily with him to his frustration.

"No you didn't, you asked me to help you in being a Vampyre. But didn't you think for one second that what you're doing is affecting not

only you, but also everyone else? Mother was only worried about you this morning; you didn't have to snap at her so rudely. She of all people understands what Dumbledore did to you." said Selene indignantly.

"I don't care!" spat Haeden, ignoring the panging of his own heart. "They haven't cared in the last fifteen years. Why should I start now when they never have in the first place? I don't care Selene. I don't give a damn about your stupid war. I'm not a Sedaire! It's not my fight, it's yours. So save your breath, love, it won't do anything now."

Selene halted in her tracks, staring incredulously at the boy still marching away before her. "After what I've told you, you still don't care? It's our war, is it? You know what Haeden; they should have just left you there to rot! We shouldn't have woken you up and released you. Mother shouldn't have risked her health to free you! Father should never have to hate himself every time he speaks little of you! You should have just stayed as Harry bloody Potter since that's who you so desperately like to be; manipulated and unloved! We shouldn't be trying so hard to make it up to you and make you understand considering all you care about is how pitiful you are."

"Go on, go back to the wizarding world and be their bloody savoir! Go on, return to Dumbledore, return to the man you know destroyed your life. You want to blame someone of your misery? Blame him, dammit! Don't blame mom and dad. All they did is tried to save you!"

"But hey, don't listen to me. As you said before, I don't know what you feel. I don't know how it feels to lose someone and have my life destroyed since according to you, I had Lily and Severus and you had no one. So go on, get out of here. I'm not stopping you. Go back to the friends who've abandoned you, go back to the man who's used you, and see if they'll ever accept you now. You're not a wizard anymore Haeden, you never were. You're a freak to them. A being gifted with immense ability they should have been gifted with as well. It has been so for centuries."

Selene marched towards the stunned Vampyre, fury etched on her face, showing to the world the power that laid behind her hypnotic eyes and amicable face. Haeden stared at the female Vampyre striding towards him, cutting the distance between in only a few short strides. He'd never seen her riled up like this before and he couldn't help but take a tentative step backwards.

Haeden didn't know what to expect from the Vampyre but being struck and shoved in the shoulder was not something he would put down as something she would do. He recalled briefly the first time he'd ever been this close to Selene. It was earlier in the summer when he was under the guise of Tobias Night and he remembered feeling her power radiating off of her but that was nothing compared to what was happening now, the blow itself sent him staggering backwards and the air around them was suddenly whipping around her hair, like a halo of power crowning itself around her.

"Go on, dammit! Get out of here. We don't need you. Go back to your twisted existence! GET OUT!" she was about to strike him again but this time he was ready and swiftly grabbed her hand. It was surprisingly hard and powerful and he was finding it difficulty to bring it down. In the end he just made do with restraining her hand in midair, well aware of that the fuming Vampyre could easily pull free from his weak hold.

"What do you want from me?" he asked through gritted teeth, power pulsating through him as he tried to keep the other Vampyre at bay.

"I want you to get out of here! I want you to leave." growled Selene.

"I won't leave." Haeden replied strongly, releasing her hand once he was certain she would no longer strike him.

"Why not? You seem not to care about the things they've done, the things they've sacrificed!" exclaimed the irate Vampyre.

"Give me time, Selene." Haeden stared at the girl solemnly

"Time?" she cried in disbelief, "We haven't got much time. There's only a few days left before Hogwarts starts and what do you think the old man would do if his saviour doesn't show up?"

"I still have to go back to Hogwarts?" Haeden asked in surprise.

"Of course," Selene said in tone that suggested there was no other option.

"How? I don't look like Harry Potter anymore." As Selene had said that it was difficult to differentiate a wizard from a Clandestine, but it

still didn't take a genius to know that Haeden Snape was not the Chosen One. Instead of the Potter mop, his hair was now sleek and long, tied up in a ponytail on his back. His face had completely lost its boyishly cherubic look, only to be replaced by higher cheek bones and an all together sharper look. If he allowed himself to acknowledge it, he was a perfect blend of Severus and Lily. His bone structure, lips and brows were definitely the older Snape's, but his eyes and nose were his mother's. He'd seen enough of the magazines his aunt fawned over whenever his uncle was not home to recognize a handsome face when he sees one and he was extremely good looking, a far cry from his introverted former self. Plus the extra added height didn't hurt either. He was positive that he was now as tall as Ron if not more so, but he knew for a fact that he was nearly as tall as the professor.

Then there was also the fact that his eyes would often times flash a deep red, a remnant from his blood rage that according to Snape, would stop doing so once his system had adjusted from being blood deprived for so long, and his skin colour was off. He was no longer the olive skinned he was before, instead his skin was now a light cream colour, not enough to register to a normal wizard what he really was, but to him the changes were very much noted.

"I can't go back looking like this." drawled Haeden.

"Of course you won't go back looking like that!" exclaimed Selene. "Dumbledore would know everything the instant your toe sets foot in that castle if you were to show up looking like that. We'll Glamour you, idiot!"

Haeden had the decency to look sheepish but decided but decided not to speak anymore. There was still a lot of tension to be resolved around them after their argument and he doubted that it won't dissolve anytime soon. Thankful it was Selene who decided to break the awful silence, though she was still fuming as she spoke. "Father's left the manor for the day, but mother's in the library if you want to have a word with her."

He was about speak about not wanting to see them again when she cut him off. "I'm merely telling you were she is. Do what you will with the information." With that final word, Selene walked away back into the manor, leaving behind Haeden to stew in his own musings.

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"Ginny," She heard someone calling her from the door but refrained from acknowledging it. She was still not in the mood to speak with the opinionated witch and buried herself deeper in her work

"Ginny," the person called out again. This time Ginny stood up from her seat and went through a stack of book piled on the corner table before going back to the couch with a new book in hand, still ignoring the person by the door.

"Ginny, please, will you speak to me!" cried the person in frustration.

The red haired girl at long last looked up at the older Gryffindor and spoke in the same indifferent voice she'd been using when it came to the girl. "What do you want, Hermione?"

Hermione took the acknowledgement of her presence as an invitation to enter the room and she sat herself opposite the youngest Weasley. "Gin, will you please tell me why you've been very cold towards me? I don't know what I've done wrong."

Ginny closed her book with a sharp snap, causing the other girl to jolt up in surprise, and stared at her with a hard look. "Hermione, you're a smart girl, you should have been able to figure out why I currently have an aversion to your presence."

"Aversion, are you sure Ginny? That's a harsh word. Do I really merit that?" asked Hermione.

"You tell me, Granger." Ginny stood up from her seat meaning to leave the room only to have a hand placed on her shoulder. She quickly shrugged the hand off and turned to face the older witch, annoyance plain on her face.

"Ginny, please talk to me. You use to be able to tell me everything." implored Hermione. "Is it about Harry?"

Ginny's eyes flared angrily and Hermione had the sense to back away from the fiery witch and looked contrite. "Gin, I know you think that what I did to Harry was inexcusable, but I know, that you know that it was the right thing to do. Ginny, we all have his best interest at heart. I didn't write that letter to anger him or make him not want

to see us, that's the only thing I regret about this whole thing. But you can't deny the fact that Harry's always jumping into things and causing more trouble. I was only doing what I think a good friend ought to do. You should do the same Ginny, if you count yourself as a good friend to Harry." She said the last part with such determination and seriousness that this time it was Ginny's turn to back away from her.

"So I should shun him then? Judge him for a mistake he never wanted to happen in the first place." Ginny said, outraged.

"I never shunned him." argued Hermione.

"You as good as did when you sent him that letter!" cried Ginny. "If that's what it takes to be a good friend to Harry, then excuse me if I don't join you." She turned her back on Hermione and strode out of the room in a huff, ignoring the shrilly voice that called her back.

She was so sick and tired of having to fight with her brother's girlfriend every time they were in the same room and the fact that in this entire place, she was the only one who seemed to care for the quiet, bespectacled green-eyed boy. She collapsed on her bed the moment she entered her room. At least in her room here in Grimmauld Place she had some privacy, well at least until it was time for bed, and then she'd have to share it with Hermione. It wasn't as bad considering as the other girl spent more time hanging out in her brother's room than be in the same room as her.

She released a well needed breathe of air, her thoughts running amok in her head. It had been awhile since she was actually alone on her own, her mother seem to take it upon herself to make sure that she stayed within her sight. They were slowly driving her insane, copped up in headquarters like this. It was really all Hermione's fault; she was such pushy girl when she can't figure things out.

Her mind made up, she bolted out of bed and grabbed her cloak from the bottom of her trunk. She had two hours at most before her mother came to get her, it was long enough. She looked left and right, making sure that the hallway was empty before making her way out as silently as she could through the front door.

A/N: Alright the next chapter is up. Hope you enjoy them both...

Read and review, I would love to hear what you have to say... I honestly do...

'til next post

dan4eva

## Chapter 17 Visions of the Hunt

"Is this really necessary?" asked Haeden, following the slender form of Selene striding through the vast grounds towards the dense canopy of trees in the dead of the night. For someone who'd been blind as a bat his entire life, it was a wonder at how clearly and perfectly he could now see, for even in the shroud of darkness, everything was as clear as day. Apparently this was yet one of the quirks that according to Selene came with being an immortal Clandestine.

"Yes," answered Selene, having no difficulty at hearing him from meters away. "You can't possibly have Trooker giving you stored blood all the time, it's highly impractical and the taste can get quite nauseating after awhile. Trust me, fresh blood is loads better."

"But it's the middle of the night!" argued Haeden. It had been a few days since their brief exchange by the lake and nothing had changed between them since then. She was still trying to make him speak to their parents at every interval she got and he would always strike her down. He could tell that he was frustrating the Vampyre to no end but was glad that she had not made a repeat of her reaction down by the lake. Fortunately, there were times when the two of them would get along just fine; like brothers and sisters. It was during those times that they could both drop their guard and really get to know each other. However, those moments were both far and few in between, only lasting a few hours before either of them would come to realize that they'd unwillingly dropped their guard.

Thankfully, it seemed that tonight was one of those nights and he wasn't feeling nearly as uptight as he would normally be around the girl.

"Exactly, the best time to catch animals off guard. Easy prey." said Selene, her voice dripping with excitement. She halted halfway towards the woods, signalling him from behind to do the same. She stuck her nose up in the air and Haeden could literally hear her as she drew in the cool night air, the action sent his skin tingling.

"Can you not smell it?" she asked, turning her bright eyes on him. "Go on, give it a try."



After his initial shock at discovering all of his five senses had developed in ways no human ever would, he'd not gone further into exploring his new found talent. He stared uncertainly at the girl, who with the help of his improved eyesight looked so distinct despite her distance. Selene gave him an encouraging nod and he copied her earlier action.

He was hesitant at first; these were all still so new to him despite all the things Selene had been teaching him the past few days. But the moment his nose touched the moist night air, everything came naturally to him, as if he'd long ago been able to do this. The first scent that reached his sensitive nose was the sweet scent of the evening dew, and then the smell of the trees as they released the much needed fresh oxygen into the air, he could even smell the distinct scent of cinnamon and morning glory he was sure came from the other Vampyre.

Selene cocked her head to the side and Haeden turned his head to search for whatever it was the girl wanted him to find. But it didn't take long for his heightened sense of smell to pick up on a musky scent further into the woods. The hunter in him immediately recognized the scent, causing his throat to burn intently with such desire that he emitted a soft growl.

Haeden snapped his eyes back at Selene only to find that the girl was already going through the first line of trees and he quickly made a dash to catch up with her, a relatively easy feat once he allowed himself to embrace his talents. The pair soon matched their strides, trekking silently through the dense foliage to avoid alarming their prey. However it was obvious which of the two was the more experienced hunter as Selene seemed to glide more through the thick undergrowth than actually treading over them, her posture ready, as that of a stalking cat.

Haeden tried to mimic her graceful movements but gave up soon after when he foolishly tripped over a large root and Selene's quiet chuckling made him all the more self-conscious. Yet after awhile, once he'd gotten accustomed to the proximity of the trees and the multitude of sounds that distracted him from his hunt, he quickly felt the thrill of their pursuit of the wild animal and his thirst intensified.

When he was but a mere wizard, a human, he'd never come close to feeling this kind of exhilarating thrill. His overpowered senses

opened up a whole new world of wonder to him. It was strange and powerful, pulling him towards that one goal through the forest, putting haste to his steps.

At long last, after what seemed like hours to the impatient young Vampyre, Selene stopped ahead of him. The female vampire stalked over to the nearest tree; and with a light spring to her feet, jumped up onto its branches, completely unscathed. Haeden stared at Selene, perched up on the tree looking very much like a predatory bird tracking its prey.

"Over there," Selene pointed over the trees. "By the clearing, a male and a female."

Haeden lifted his head towards the indicated direction and sure enough, the musky scent he'd caught earlier was much closer now and he could hear the two deer's rapid breathing and heart beat. He immediately dashed off in their general direction and he could tell by the rustling of the leaves that Selene was following him from up in the trees.

His feet were taking him through the dense canopy of trees before he could even register where he was heading, the cool summer night's breeze whipping at his long hair. He was feeling extremely elated and liberated running through the forest and chasing after his elusive meal. After being controlled and manipulated all his life, he was finally allowing himself to become who he really was. He looked up for a second to find Selene still jumping from branch to branch, the moon light beaming down on her, making her look even paler and for her grey eyes to glow brightly in the dark.

As he got closer to their target, Selene startled him by jumped right in front of him, subsequently halting his progress.

"Slow down!" admonished the girl, "Do not scare them off."

Haeden flashed a playful grin at the girl but slowed down his pace to a stealthier prow. Not long after, they arrived at the edge of a clearing and Haeden was able to make out a doe and a deer grazing peacefully on the other side. The entire clearing was bathed in the white, mysterious glow of the moonlight; creating a glowing white spectrum in the middle of the vast forest. His throat emitted a low growl which fortunately went unnoticed by the two grazing animals.

He was soon finding it hard to stop himself from just showing himself and sinking his fangs down their throats. A cool hand grabbed his, bringing him back over his senses.

"We mustn't harm them more than what is necessary." she said slowly to the young Vampyre. "We never kill if we can help it, our Magyck forbids it."

"How do we get them?" asked Haeden impatiently, reluctantly taking his eyes off his prey. But the smell of their blood and the sound of it coursing rapid through their body was making it very hard to do so.

"Haeden, look at me!" she said with more force, tightening her hold on him lest he completely lost control. "The first time around is always the hardest, I too had a hard time. But it is even more so for you because your instincts have been subdued all this time and this sudden exposure is not helping you control your instincts any better. We tried to gradually get you accustomed to the smell of fresh blood that is why it is only now that I've taken you hunting."

"I get it." said Haeden.

"No you don't." said the other Vampyre and in a blink of an eye stood before the boy and blocked his view of the clearing. "This isn't a joke Haeden! We may be powerful, but that doesn't mean we are free to do everything we desire at every whim. There are rules to follow lest we become like the others. Did you not listen to the things I've been telling you?"

"I did. And I really do get it. I understand why we have to follow these rules, it's what's keeping me from hating myself and what I've become, knowing that I can never use my powers to harm another." uttered Haeden, looking straight into her eyes, which had turned silver in the moonlight.

Selene stared at him like she didn't know whether or not to believe him, after all he had been a little unexpected the whole time he was here. However the fact that they had spent much longer in the woods than she had initially planned made her relent despite her misgivings.

"Very well, watch carefully what I do, we only have one shot at this before the other one notices and runs off." she said before stalking

away from the trees and into the clearing. As she prowled towards the two creatures, she couldn't help but ask herself if she was doing all this right. Due to their unnatural condition, Vampyres were only able to reproduce once in their eternal life, twice if they were lucky. A third child in a Vampyre family had only happened once in their long history. And because of that, it was usually the parents who taught their children how to hunt, but since Haeden currently hated his father's guts, she was the only one left to do the job.

She had never taught anyone anything relative to hunting before and merely went along with what she thought ought to be showed to a learning Vampyre. There wasn't much she could go by and she hoped to the stars that she was going by it the right way, if only not for the boy's well being. She took a quick glance back towards the edge of the clearing and was glad that Haeden still had his eyes trained on her instead of their prey. Perhaps he really was telling the truth.

She took one last deliberate step before lunging forward so fast that no average eye would ever see it, and the next second she was on top of the deer, sinking her fangs in to deliver the paralytic venom that would prevent the animal from escaping her grasp. Once the venom had taken effect, Selene signalled for Haeden to take on the other animal who had just realized that its companion was now in the hands of a predator.

Haeden stared at the wild animal and saw, for a split second, the fight in its eyes. With only a few seconds to waste, he dashed from the trees and lunged straight for the deer's vulnerable neck. He knew that if he chose, his venom could kill the defenceless creature in an instant. But he also knew that despite what his instincts were telling him, what he'd told Selene earlier was true. He was not a monster and he would not become one! He bared his fangs, glistening menacingly in the moonlight, and sunk it deep into the deer's fleshy skin.

The deer was stronger than he'd expected and struggled longer in his grip before finally succumbing to the Vampyre venom. As soon as the warm blood touched his lips, he knew he'd been missing out on something unexplainably wonderful his entire life; it made him giddy in delight. Indeed the fresh liquid was far better than the ones he'd been given the past few days. It was like having desired water without ever knowing of the wine. The warm liquid gushed down his

aching throat, soothing out the pain he'd felt whilst his burning thirst was all that controlled him. Unknown to him, his eyes had lost their previously dark colouring and was now a shining orb of emerald, much like Selene's silver ones. He lapped more of the sweet tasting blood, allowing it to slush down his throat and quenching his thirst, before retracting his fangs off the poor beast before he drank it dry.

He ran his finger around his lips to gather the blood that had remained and sucked it hungrily, his eyes closing in the euphoria it gave him. Upon opening his eyes, he found Selene resting on a tree stump watching him in fascination, the doe she had fed on long gone. He then stood up, straightening his rumpled robes and watched as his deer sauntered off clumsily away from the clearing.

"That was fun," he said softly, unable to find words to describe it.

Selene smiled a genuine smile at him and nodded. "Quite unlike anything else."

"Will they be alright?" asked Haeden, walking towards the relaxed Vampyre.

"The venom acts as both an anaesthetic and a healing draught. They'll be disoriented for a couple of hours but they'll be fine." answered Selene.

"Good," Haeden sighed in relief, glad that his transformation had not turned him into something he could not accept and handle.

"Come on, we've got to get back. We've been gone longer than I'd planned." said Selene, leaning away from the stump and making her way towards the dark canopy of trees.

"When can we do this again?" asked Haeden, following the girl's lead out of the forest. This time the forest was quieter, much calmer, and the star dusk sky provided ample light to show them their path.

"It depends; we don't really have to hunt often. Once or twice a week is sufficient. But you would have to drink daily for a few more weeks if we're to have you back in shape." The agile Vampyre leapt over a fallen tree while Haeden simply ran straight through it, creating such a thunderous sound that it sent the birds in frenzy. The tree lay on

the forest floor, broken clean in two. Selene frowned at the boy's childish behaviour but found that she couldn't really blame the boy. If it was her experiencing the sense of liberty that came with being a powerful immortal for the first time, she would probably do the same thing, probably even more.

"Does that mean we get to hunt again tomorrow?" asked Haeden, grinning like mad.

"Most probably. It seems that you have depleted Trooker's store of blood." said Selene, glad to find the younger Vampyre so animated.

Haeden's face had never been so lively in the past few weeks they'd rescued him. She had thought that the cloud of darkness had been such a constant company of the boy would never fade away despite her attempts to get him open up, but here he was now, acting like none of this had ever happened. It seemed that the hunt had done much more than they'd hoped for. But if Haeden would only feel the same towards their parents, then they wouldn't have to move along at such a snail's pace; every step deliberated, every word spoken, calculated.

She took another lingering look at the boy and realized for the first time that she had never seen him smile before now. He was smiling a cocky smile, innocent yet filled with veiled streak, and his eyes were swimming delightfully at having just fed, glowing brighter than she'd seen in days. His face had also lost its sallow look, appearing much healthier and fuller. It was a look she could get used to seeing everyday, then she remembered of another person with the same veiled smile.

She was so caught up with her thoughts that when a hand grabbed hers, she immediately acted on impulse and pulled the person towards her, her fangs dangerously close to a tense throat.

"Selene, it's me!" choked out Haeden, taken by surprise by her reaction.

The other Vampyre blinked and when she saw who she had in a death grip, growled in frustration before leaping far away from the boy. She couldn't believe how close she was from biting Haeden. Hadn't Severus helped her get past this already? Why the hell was she regressing now? She ran her long fingers through her dark locks

and growled once more in frustration. How ironic that just minutes ago she was lecturing the boy about controlling his instincts and here she was, inches from violating the Valkari, the Vampyric laws that governed them, ultimately delivering them onto the hands of Hagha, or death as it was called by muggles.

"Are you alright?" Selene startled at the voice, she had not heard him approach her.

"Yeah, I'm fine." She barked lightly, though softened her tone at his hurt expression. "I'm sorry about that."

"I guess every one of us is entitled to a few moments of aggression, god knows I have." said Haeden coolly.

Selene frowned at his words. She knew this was more than pent up aggression, but she didn't bother correcting him for she didn't know herself what had brought on her hostile reaction.

The two of them continued to trek through the forest, their pace slower this time around. After awhile Haeden spoke up, breaking the silence that had suddenly fallen over them.

"So do you want to know what I was going to ask you before you attacked me or are we just going to keep ignoring each other?"

Without turning to look at her companion, she spoke, her voice resigned. "What were you going to ask?"

Haeden frowned, it seemed that their candid exchanges were once more done and over with. "I was wondering whether Vampyres ever feed on humans."

"Yes." she replied almost immediately.

"Oh," Haeden articulated eloquently.

Selene looked fairly at the boy and explained, "Though it does not happen often. Human blood is much more potent in relieving our thirst compared to that of animals'. They insinuate such frenzy in us that for a few hours, it gives us just a bit more power. That's probably the reason why wizards fear our kind, for even common vampires gain unparalleled powers with just one drink of human blood.

Even muggles have heard telltales of our kind and have built their own beliefs around it."

"However because of the implied strength we gain even for just a few hours, it also drives us over the edge. We become uncontrollable if it is human blood we feed on for long periods of time. The high frenzy it gives us is enough for our Magyck to rebel against us, eating away at us from the inside. That is why the Council keeps a close eye on Vampyres who go out of the Plane to feed."

Haeden didn't know what to say for there really was nothing he could add to that. However it did somehow bring his spirits down knowing that there were aspects of who he was that wasn't all great. He should have expected this part of being a Vampyre despite their difference from the stereotypes, but then he'd have to think of how much a freak he was again and he didn't want to open that part of himself anymore. His disappointment must have shown on his face because Selene spoke to him again, this time in a more reassuring manner, albeit a tad hard.

"No need to look so glum, it's not as gruesome as you think, muggles really do exaggerate things a bit too much! Honestly, all the blood and gore makes for bad business amongst Vampyres. There's a saying in our kind that goes 'If you can't keep the blood off your shirt, go vegetarian!'"

Haeden suppressed a laugh that threatened to overwhelm him, dispersing his darker thoughts from the front of his mind. Selene smiled inwardly at having prevented Haeden from wallowing in self hatred and continued her walk through the forest. A few meters away she could finally see the manor standing majestically under the moonlight. She quickened her pace and beside her she could feel Haeden doing the same.

They reached the front doors in good time, without ever having to break in sweat, their stomachs still full of the warm liquid. The doors opened on their own accord, their Magyckal signatures allowing them entrance into the furtive house. The spacious interior was mostly lit by the iron wrought chandeliers and torches that could be found all over the place, giving it a dim flickering glow of orange.



Selene was about halfway through the entrance hall and up the stairs when Haeden's tentative voice called her out. She turned around to find the young man staring right at her, a curious expression on his face. She cocked her head in question.

"Lin, have you ever... you know... drank from... er... humans?"

Haeden watched as Selene's expression smoothened out, leaving behind no trace of emotion. He didn't think she would ever answer him when at last she spoke, her voice soft.

"Yes, once, a long time ago." At this she surprised him by smiling faintly at him. "It was the best thing I've ever had."

Haeden nodded, returning the smile. "Go to bed Haeden, it's late." said Selene, making her way up the stairs once more.

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It has been a routine of hers now to look through the sieves of time, reminding herself of the trials they had mutually accepted to bear, and it pained her ancient heart to see that even after all they had done, there were still so many danger that lay ahead for her family. For decades now the Royal Court had had nothing on its mind but the immediate removal of the wizard who was threatening to have them exposed and their powers bent to his will. Such a threat had happened once before, a thousand years ago; completely destroying any faith the Clandestines had had with the wizard-kind. They vowed that such a thing would never happen again, that they would never allow the wizards to set foot into their Plane once more, and Clandestines have a very long memory.

Nearly a century had passed since a hard-headed Warlock youth ran away from home and illegally crossed the boundaries that separated their Magyckal plane from that of the wizards'. Out of spite, he'd befriended a young wizard, thinking that years of isolation might have erased the memory of their past from their subconscious. Without ever considering the consequences of his rash actions, he eventually revealed far too much than what he should have ever revealed to the young wizard. By the time he'd come to realize what he had incontrovertibly done, it was already too late. The wizard was already powerful even before he and the wayward Warlock crossed

paths and with the knowledge of the young Warlock's powers, he ultimately wanted more.

As soon as the Council got wind of the breach, the young Warlock was punished by being given the responsibility to destroy the threat and if ever he failed to accomplish the task, his family and their families before them would continue on until such the day would come when the Warlock's actions would be atoned. It was as much a curse as the Cruciatus, the sentence the Council cast upon them.

But unfortunately the Warlock youth was defeated by the brief camaraderie he'd felt towards the wizard, his Magyck unwilling to cast the spell that would have prevented the war from stretching through the generations.

She gripped the stone well in remembrance, her heavy heart filling out in sorrow, and thus it has now fallen unto her children to bear the burdens of war.

"My Queen," a beautiful, youthful woman in a flowing blue dress addressed the regal woman that stood rigid beneath the darkening skies.

The older woman wore an elegant purple coloured dress that draped heavily to the ground, fanning out beneath her feet. The black cloak she had over her person, in protection of the chilly night, had its hood raised loosely over her head, partial hiding her frail features in its dark recess. If one had to look at outward features alone, the stately woman was the epitome of a turn-of-the-century classic beauty that had gracefully accepted age. Yet one look at the furrowed lines above her artistically carved brow, the faded intensity in her dark eyes and the tinge of fatigue that clung to her creamy skin, one would immediately come to know of her age and the lengths she'd had to endure to even come as far.

"Tell me Valeria, what can you See?" the woman asked the newcomer, peering deeper into the depths of the well.

"My Queen, I'm afraid I am not gifted in the art of the Seers." replied the younger woman, not wanting to look into the dark waters of the well.

The older woman sighed, backing away from the obstructive fixture. "So few of us can ever truly decipher the ripples of time, that sometimes even I believe I have never truly Seen."

"Surely, My Queen, that a person such as yourself is able to See pass the murky waters the well reveals." said the youth, not understanding what the other woman had said.

"You cloud yourself, Valeria." the Queen turned around to look at her companion, her eyes weary with age.

"My apologies, My Queen." Valeria bowed her head in shame.

The Queen completely averted her eyes from the well and lifted the skirt of her dress before gracefully striding through the grounds, her bare feet making light imprints on the wet grass. "You are young still, Valeria, and cannot be faulted of your ignorance. However as your Queen, I pray you do not let your ignorance hinder you from the truth, for that is all we can truly rely on in these dark times. Seeing can only show us as much as we are willing to See."

"I won't, your Highness." answered Valeria, trailing quietly after the Queen.

"Tell me, Valeria, has there been any word from my son?"

"No word has arrived from the Prince, My Queen. But the Taie has come to see you."

The queen halted in her steps, turning in surprise at her lady-in-waiting. "Eldriana's daughter?"

"Yes. She wishes to speak to you, My Queen."

Valeria then led the Queen from the open grounds of the courtyard to the warmly lit halls of the great fortress that housed the reigning family of the Royal Court. A pair of golden double doors opened ahead of them and Valeria stopped before it whilst the Queen continued on into the chamber.

The weary queen swept quickly across the empty halls and flitted through yet another set of doors, this time far less grand than the ones that could be found in the fortress' main hallways, and into a

room void of anything but a grand archway that seem to be suspended in the high-ceilinged room, and a young girl with long blonde hair that reached all the way to the floor.

"What brings you here, childe?" asked the Queen.

"My Queen," the girl took the skirt of her flowing white dress, fanning it out all around her in a circle and bending down to the floor in respect to the Queen of Kings and Queens.

"Rise, childe," ordered the Queen, lifting the girl's face to see a pair of deep blue eyes. "Something ails you?"

"No, my Queen." said the girl, rising to her feet but only reaching the older woman's breast. "I was sent here by the Dark Lord to seek your guidance in gaining favour in the Council."

The Queen's dark brows came together in confusion. "If it is the Dark Lord who is seeking for the Court's guidance, why is it you who crossed the folds and into the gateway and not the Airu?"

"Unforeseen circumstances have forced her to become temporarily detained." explained the long-haired blonde.

"I see," said the Queen, waving her hand and two lounge chairs immediately appeared before them. She gestured for the girl to take a seat. "Why does he need our guidance?"

"It is not the Court he seeks, but yours, My Queen."

"Very well," the Queen added an edge to her smooth tones. "Why does he require my guidance? Is he not doing well in his endeavours?"

"He's requesting that the Council grant him more leverage when it comes to the overthrowing of the current Ministry and says that with it, Fudge's plan could be stopped and the source of Dumbledore's rising power could finally be discovered."

"Lord Voldemort has always enjoyed a reasonable amount of favour amongst the Council members, he does not need my help." said the Queen simply.

"But the favour he needs requires the Council to bend the rules of Magyck around him, that they would allow him to personally dole out what he needs to be done, without the fear of repercussions." said the Taie, tentatively.

"Preposterous!" cried the Queen, leaning forward her chair. "There is a reason why all Clandestines adhere to the rules! Magyck is not something that can be tamed at will, it is a wild entity that has been gifted to our people, and such things require us to sacrifice our freedom to abuse and exploit it! Does he not know of the ramifications such a request would do to him should he violate the rules? He is only half Clandestine after all, how can you say that he will not succumb to the desire for more power like the many others before him?"

"My Queen," beseeched the girl. "The Dark Lord merely wishes this to be temporary. He is not requesting the Council to grant him this for an eternity, he knows only too well what such temptations could do to people."

"And he dares to ask of it?" demanded the Queen.

"He knows that there is a possibility that it would change him but he is willing to take the risk to end the war." the young girl said diplomatically.

"That is the most stupid thing that I have ever heard!" cried the Queen, though it was obvious how much softer her voice was compared to earlier on, leaning back into her chair, a noticeably slouch in her shoulders.

"That's what he said you would say." said the girl jovially.

The Queen's lips turned up an inch but did not respond at once to the Taie's subtle attempt at tact. Tom knew her well, that she had long known, but it was in times like this that she could clearly see the workings of his often obscure mind. He knew that she was hard pressed to give up on her beliefs and principles. But he also knew in her that above all else, she wanted this war to end as soon as possible, just as much as her family and the others did.

The Slytherin heir was not giving her much to choose from.

Pinching the bridge of her nose, a habit she had undoubtedly passed onto her son, she spoke at last. "What does the Dark Prince say of this?"

"He agrees, My Queen, for he is desperate to end this without including the Sedaire." answered the girl.

The Queen sighed heavily, she was skilfully cornered. "I do not guarantee those ancient vises in the Council would agree to this. They will undoubtedly see this as another attempt at leeching us of our Magyck."

"My Lord has faith in you, My Queen."

"Tell Voldemort flattery will get him nowhere." snapped the Queen good-naturedly. "Though do tell him I will try my best but I do not guarantee that they will agree. To them the Sedaire is responsible when it comes to ending this war and they will not relent easily to do away with such thoughts."

"If only the Council would accept that it was not only one man's fault that this war happened and cease this inane chain of Sedaires sent forth to continue their family's mistake in judgement." offered the girl, rising from her seat.

"Yes, if only." agreed the Queen, following the girl's movements, rising from her seat as well.

"Thank you, My Queen." the Taie bowed down once more in respect, falling before the taller Queen.

"Fair passage, my childe." Placing her fair hands atop the girl's long, beautiful tresses, the Queen bestowed upon the girl the blessings of the ancient for her safe passage into the world of the mundane.

The young girl slowly rose to her feet and headed for the only other thing in the room. The markings carved on the archway glowed brightly, emitting a soft golden hue, and the girl walked right into it, disappearing completely from the Clandestine Plane.

The Queen of the Royal Court strode out of the room, her every step filled with the intent of helping her children end the war and back into

her care. Perhaps this was what the dark waters were trying to tell her.

'Seeing can only show us as much as we are willing to See'. She clearly did not see this coming.

A/N: I would just like to say that both chapters have yet been beta-ed so please pardon and grammatical errors i have failed to notice...

read and review...

MERRY CHRISTMAS AND A HAPPY NEY YEAR EVERYONE!

dan4eva

## Chapter 18 The Hand of Bereavement

The sky was a brilliant azure, a seemingly cloudless canvas that transcended all irrelevant beings that fell beneath its endless horizon. In a way it offered a comfortable sense of tranquillity to his otherwise tangled life. It was the only thing he could look forward to everyday that wouldn't drastically change before his eyes; rain or shine, the sky would always be blue, and for that he was grateful.

He may now have come to terms with his being a Vampyre, but there were still days when he would sink into his demons. He hated those times much more than he hated his parents at the moment, for those times rendered him incapable of any rational thought. He would always awake from those brief periods of darkness thinking that he was no longer the same person because some part of him still believed in his Uncle Vernon's words; he was a freak, a monster, and he really being a Vampyre just solidified his wretched uncle's assertions.

But there too were days when it was the endless sky he would see first when he woke up and his days wouldn't be so bad. It was during those times that he gladly embraced his identity; happily allowed his senses to open up a brand new world to his confounded mind. He could easily forget his problems and simply live for the present, not having to worry about what he'd left behind and what still lay ahead. In those times he was merely Haeden, not Harry, not Potter and not even Snape, just Haeden.

Today was neither one of those days.

Rain lashed viciously at his towering window, deafening any sound he dared to produce over the thunderous weather. For two days straight now the heavens have opened up with a vengeance, flooding up the vast lake and sending premature chills to the rooms of the stone manor. Perhaps if he wasn't cooped up inside with only his mother's poignant looks, Snape's hard-pressed face and Selene's knowing glances, he wouldn't be feeling as cranky and snappy as he was feeling now. But the weather was unrelenting, forcing all of them to stay within the warmer confines of the manor and its large fireplaces.



Fortunately for him, tonight was his last night in the secluded manor, tomorrow he would board the scarlet train bound to Hogwarts, and for the first time since last June, he would finally be able to see his friends. He wanted to know whether they were still on his side and after having weeks to ponder through his thoughts, he was willing to give them the benefit of the doubt and give them a chance to explain themselves and their actions. He wasn't particularly concerned whether they would remain by his side, but because of the years they'd spent together when he was still Harry, he couldn't help but give them one last shot, for after all, they had been great friends and he could use all the help he could get.

However he wasn't particularly pleased with the prospect of returning to the castle and submitting himself once more to the scrutiny of Albus Dumbledore. But according to Selene they didn't have any choice; if Harry Potter did not return to Hogwarts on the first of September, the wizarding public would panic and Dumbledore would know exactly what had happened under his nose, and the Clandestines did not want that. The outcome of the war all relied on Dumbledore's obliviousness to the fact that Haeden was no longer under his control. The longer they were able to pull up the charade, the better their chances were of finding the old man's weaknesses.

It was four days after his blood rage that he was finally strong enough to hear out Selene as she told him all he wanted to know. He could still remember his mixed reaction to all of the things she had said.

"How are you feeling today?" Selene entered the room after his Magyck alerted him of her presence, a laden tray in her hands. So far he had only allowed the female Vampyre to come see him and had refused to allow anyone else entrance to his room. He knew from the house elf Trooker that both his parents had been trying to get him to talk to them, but he was adamant and was not yet ready to see them. And so for the past few days, it had only been Selene, who had seen him in his mopping, angst state.

"Better I guess." He did not elaborate for it was clear that it wasn't his physical being she was referring to. His weakened body had taken well to his blood diet, much to his surprise, and he was back to a healthier body only a day after he awoke from his blood rage.

He was not yet as healthy as they claim he should be at his age, but it was an improvement to his dehydrated self not a few days back.

No, it was his emotional state she was referring to, and of that he was uncertain. He'd had a few days to reflect on recent happenings and he'd yet to make up his mind what he thought of them, he needed more information before he could make an assessment. He prayed that Selene was now more willing to divulge.

"That's good," said Selene smilingly, placing her burden on the wooden desk.

"I guess." stated Haeden, uncaring.

"You missed dinner again," Selene said conversationally, hoping to get something out from the boy.

Haeden did not bother answering. His first experience of attending dinner with the rest of them was so tense and unbearable that he had refused the succeeding nights, preferring to have his meals sent up by either Selene or Trooker. He knew he was being unreasonable and rather ungrateful, but he just could not bring himself to pretend that all was fine between him and his parents to be able to sit comfortably before them in the dinner table.

"Well, anyway," continued Selene as if the silence had not bothered her "I just came up here to give you your dinner. I should get going now."

Haeden tried to ignore her departing form but his frustrations got the best of him and he called her back as she was about to shut the door. "Is it always just gonna be like this, huh?"

"It's your call Haeden," replied Selene.

"What if I don't want to call on anything? What if just want to be left alone? Of all people I deserve it. Why should I get involve in this?" snapped Haeden.

Selene stared long and hard at the new Vampyre. "Because you are a Sedaire."

"A what?" cried Haeden. Selene heaved a huge sigh and walked back towards the ebony haired youth. She sat herself on the ledge before the large window and gestured for him come closer to her. He moved towards her but did not sit with her on the ledge; instead he sat on the side of the bed, directly before the grey eyed Vampyre.

"Nearly a century ago, a young wayward Warlock crossed the gateway to the world of wizards in spite of his parents' will to have him sit in the Court. His irrationality eventually led him into revealing to a common wizard what we have tried so hard to keep hidden. He had breached the secrecy of our people and the Council severely punished him for it. However none of them expected for the wizard to gather his own band of followers to seek us out."

"Dumbledore." Haeden said with certainty.

Selene nodded. "Yes, it was a seventeen year old Albus Dumbledore that the Warlock had befriended and unwittingly revealed our secrets to."

"So what's this have to do with being a... a Sedaire?" asked Haeden.

"You've got to know that the Council is made up of the Clandestine plane's most ancient beings. It is the very same Council that ordered the wizard kind and other beings away from our world all those years ago. The threat Dumbledore imposed on us was unacceptable and they therefore did the only logical thing to do back then. They released the Warlock and in return he had to defeat Dumbledore as the Council refused to have a repeat of the bloodshed in our history."

"Unfortunately the Warlock was viewed by the wizards as a Dark Lord trying to defeat Dumbledore who had by then established himself as the wizarding world's greatest advocate of the Light. This was the start of the first war. It was dark times Haeden, though we were much more powerful than the wizards, our numbers were limited and we were not raised to fight and cause harm, lest we completely lose control of our Magyck. In the end we were unsuccessful and Dumbledore had quickly gained more strength and followers. The Council was at a lost, the people were getting scared and the Clandestines that dwelled amongst the wizards were slowly disappearing. It was then that the Council decided that this was the sole responsibility of the one who had unwittingly betrayed

the people; our family, the descendents of the wayward Warlock. You can say that the Council cast a curse on us because ever since that day, our family has been in the fore front of this war, trying in vain to relieve Dumbledore of his power and regain favour within the Council."

"So this means that I'm a descendent of this Warlock and that I have no choice but to fight. When were you going to tell me this? When I've completely lost it?" demanded Haeden.

"We were planning to tell you right after your Release, but you've been avoiding mom and dad, and then your blood rage happened. We had to wait until you were healthy again before telling you something of this gravity." explained Selene.

"You know ever since I've been here, you've held information regarding my life and then when you spring things like this, you expect me to just be okay with it? Well I'm not okay with it! Don't I get a say in anything? You tell me that my life had been nothing but a lie and then you put me here, and everything is just as they were before!" Haeden said angrily directly at Selene's porcelain face.

"Would you rather go back to who you were before?" questioned Selene, her eyes flaring slightly.

Haeden wisely kept quiet. Despite his reservations regarding his present company, he would rather die than go back to the Dursleys. "Why does it have to be me? Why can't it be you? You're my older sister!"

"It's just the way it works." said Selene sharply, not meeting the younger Vampyre's eyes.

"Who was this Warlock anyway?" he asked once he was better in control of his anger.

"I believe you know him. He's labelled as the darkest Dark Lord before Voldemort." replied Selene, glad that the boy could now control his temper.

Haeden's brows furrowed in thought. "Grindenwald?"

"Yes. They all thought that he was trying to control the wizarding world when in all actuality he was trying to stop Dumbledore from gaining our Magyck and ultimately controlling the wizarding world. Wizards can be so blind sometimes." said Selene with antipathy.

"But this doesn't answer why Dumbledore tried to control me." he asked brusquely.

"It was only in recent years that Dumbledore figured out that the council sent forth Sedaïres or Dark Children to fight him off. He sought them out hoping that if he could gather and control them he could gain entrance to our world and finally be able to access the Magyck that our ancestor foolishly told him. You're not the first Sedaïre he tried to control you know. His forces detected a Halfling in a muggle orphanage; I believe you know him as Tom Riddle, able to perform magic beyond his years. He'd hoped to use the childe against Grindenwald's forces but he'd waited too long to take the childe and by the time he was out of Hogwarts, he had figured out his heritage and rose to fight alongside Grindenwald instead. It wouldn't be for another three decades before Dumbledore was able to track down the trail of Sedaïres he had lost due to Voldemort's efforts."

"I'm related to Voldemort?" cried Haeden incredulously, getting abruptly on his feet. Of all the truths that have been revealed, this has got to be the worst.

"Yes, though distantly, so don't worry." said Selene smilingly.

"Don't worry? Are you mad? All my life I thought he was out to kill me and now you tell me his my distant uncle or something? I already have one murderous uncle, I don't need another one!" said Haeden, eyes sharp and glaring.

"You don't have to like him if you don't want to." said Selene defensively, "Must you always jump on me?"

Haeden merely glared at her, his thoughts trying to process the new truth revealed to him. "Who was the next Sedaïre Dumbledore found?" he asked after awhile, ignoring the looks he was getting from the other Vampyre and trying to keep the thought that he was related, no matter how distant, from Voldemort.

Selene did not answer at once, though when she did her voice had lost its previously light tone. "Mother,"

All thoughts of Voldemort immediately fled his mind. He stared disbelievingly at Selene, but the truth was etched so clearly on her face that his denial died on his lips before he could even voice them. He hadn't really thought of that possibility. So his mother had been a victim as well. Well he did know that she had been a victim at some point in her life, but to have gone through what he had? Her face flashed briefly in his mind and for the first time he realized that her green eyes held the same lost look his held. It was at that instance that he saw his mother in a different light.

"Now you know." Selene watched the boy assess all that she had told him, hoping that this time he would finally be able to forgive and acknowledge them. There were still a lot that needed to be discussed, but she was certain that in time things would work out; they needed to be positive.

"How long?" he'd managed to ask before Selene was completely out of his room.

"Three years, Haeden." The door then closed with a soft click, renewing the spells he'd placed on them.

After he arrived at the stone manor, Selene had gone back to the Leaky Cauldron to retrieve all of his effects including his Hogwarts trunk, and he was halfway into sorting his belongings when he stumbled upon a pile of unopened packages at the bottom of his trunk. He picked up one that was relatively bulky and frowned at the handwriting he found on the outside. He looked back at the remaining packages with uncertainty; these were the packages he'd received on his birthday.

The bulky object in his hands was from Hermione. He was half tempted to open it and see what she'd given him but half of him could still clearly recall the letter that came along with it. In the end he opened it, reasoning with himself that he really had nothing to lose anymore and that not opening the package would not change his current feelings towards his friend.

The package turned out to be a book, a fairly thick book at that. It was brand new and the leather used to bind it still smelt strongly. He

flipped the book around but there was nothing to indicate of its title or its content. It was only when he opened it to its first page did he read of its title. Life, Death, and Perspectives: A Psychological Look into the Eyes of a Troubled Mind.

Haeden stared at the looped inscriptions, not knowing whether to laugh at it or be angry that Hermione thought him to be crazy. In a rather obscure way it gave him a sense of what to expect when he sees them in the train tomorrow, and he was sure he was not going to like it one bit. He could still feel their betrayal fresh in his heart, and it made a number of emotions surge up to the surface. He gave the book one last piercing look before tossing it aside together with the others he'd received on his birthday and the gold wristlet spelled with a tracking charm Ron had given him.

He was all about ready to close the lid of his trunk when another object caught his eye. It was lodge in the corners of the trunk and he would not have seen it had it not pierced a hole through a pair of one of his socks. It was a shard of something very sharp and it had managed to cut a slit on his skin as he was trying to dislodge it from his trunk. Sucking blissfully at the blood that had started to pool on his cut finger, he examined the artefact.

Outside, the rain continued to pour heavily, bringing with it a tumultuous clap of thunder that reverberated throughout the stone dwelling. At the same time, memories of a pain suppressed reared its ugly head back to the surface, squeezing at the lump in his chest he thought he'd learnt to control. Lighting then flashed brightly, illuminating the dark recesses of the room and bringing focus to the pallid face reflected in the mirror held in his shaking hands; a piece to something that was once whole and concrete.

How was it that when one tries to forget something horrible, it always finds a way of coming back? And when it does come back, one knows not what to do with it. He stared at the mirror, its sharp edges cutting deeper into his skin and for the first time, he found no desire for blood.

Sirius.

And with the uncontrolled strength of a learning Vampyre, Haeden crushed the mirror into dust, ignorant to the stinging pain his right hand now felt. Perhaps he had been too rash to assume that he

desired for no blood, because as the feeling of renewed hate and anger coursed through him, he had this voracious drive to do something. Anything to forever rid himself of the raw emotion in his chest.

Perhaps it was blood of a different kind he desired.

He grabbed a wooden box that was placed on top of his trunk and headed for the parlour. The parlour was found next to the library and was a small room compared to the large living room off of the entrance hall. However its interior held the same warmth and comfort the larger room held. It was one of the rooms he rarely went into.

The door to the parlour was ajar when he got there and merely had to push it open to get in. The room's large fireplace provided a warm refuge to the horrid weather, its heat wafted comfortably to his chilled skin. Inside he caught sight of Snape silently working by the desk, immersed in a pile of parchments. His mother was seated on the couch in front of the fire, her legs covered by a thick quilt, a tome propped open on her lap and sitting by the hearth, writing in a journal was Selene, and it was she who first noticed his presence.

"Haeden," she said with a smile, putting her book aside.

That ultimately caught the attention of their parents and two pairs of eyes turned to his direction. He took a surprised step backwards, his stomach clenching at the unwanted attention. Lily sprang to her feet at once, the quilt sliding neatly on her feet. The smile on her face made Haeden want to run away, it was so filled with love and concern that he wanted to run up to her; however he could not, not yet, and that was made it so painful.

"You're bleeding," cried Lily in surprise when she saw the piece of cloth he had wrapped around his hand.

Haeden immediately placed his right hand inside his robes, "It's nothing."

"Nonsense." exclaimed his mother. Despite her bad leg, she had stridden quickly over to him and grabbed his hand out of his pocket. Haeden tensed up at the contact from his mother, watching warily as she held his hand gently in her hands. She undid the cloth he had



hastily used to staunch the bleeding and frowned at the sight of the long angry gash. She then muttered a few indiscernible words, her lips moving far too fast for him to catch any of the words she had uttered. After awhile his wounded hand started glowing lightly, a feeling of cold running down to his fingers. He stared at his mother's worried face and a knot started to form somewhere between his throat and his chest.

As quickly as his hands had glowed, the light vanished, leaving nothing but a faint trace of healed flesh. He lifted his arm and examined every inch of his skin, amazed at how quickly it had healed. "Thanks," he muttered softly, trying not to meet his mother's eyes.

"It's what mothers do," she replied poignantly. "Your own Magyck and venom would have healed the wound just fine, but I wanted to do it."

"Thanks," he repeated, lowering his hand and looking up to find that the other two had been watching their interactions just as attentively.

"You look well, Haeden." stated Snape hesitantly, breaking the silence that had ensued after Lily had healed their son.

Haeden stared hard at his father. He was still undecided about what his feelings were towards the man but decided that it would be harmless to at least answer him. "I've been feeling better."

"That's good," replied the man. Haeden found it extremely unsettling to see his stern Potions Master acting so – human; he could swear that the Severus Snape he knew would never be caught fiddling with his quill and struggling to find the right words to say. This was a completely different man.

"What have you got in your hand?" Selene asked, staring at the box he was holding. She had abandoned her position by the hearth and was now sitting on the armrest of the couch their mother had vacated.

"It's just something I got in Diagon Alley," lied Haeden, pressing the box closer to his person. "Look I only came down here to ask if I could go out for awhile."

"There's a storm out there," argued Lily.

"I have to do something," said Haeden firmly.

"What would you be doing so late at night?" asked his mother.

"Look, I haven't asked for anything else, so why don't you just let me go. I swear I won't run away, no matter how tempting it may be." pressed Haeden, looking between his mother and father.

"It's late, Haeden." said Snape with a finality in his tone at he'd hoped would deter the young Vampyre. However Haeden was not easy swayed, especially not from a man who had done nothing but make his life hell. He glared at the tall man for all it was worth and said his next words with a sneer in his mouth.

"Fine, I was merely asking to be polite. If you'll excuse me, I need to be elsewhere." He tried not to catch his mother's woeful expression as he exited the parlour, which, thanks to him, had lost its warmth.

"Severus!" he heard his mother cry out once his back was turned. He wondered what the man would do to get him to stay, but he of course wasn't going to stay. He had barely reached the door when it suddenly shut tight before him. He tugged at the doorknob, pulling and turning it, but the door remained sealed to him.

"Let me go!" he snapped, turning to face his parents.

"Just what do you plan on doing?" Snape had, in a blur of his dark robes, moved from his position behind the desk to stand behind his wife.

"Why do you care?" said Haeden, forgetting the man he had seen earlier.

"I'm your father, young man." replied Snape sternly.

"Oh. Really? Since when?" cried Haeden incredulously.

"Haeden!" his mother gasped.

Severus gathered all of the patience that made him the best spy in the war and closed his eyes. He was not expecting anything civil

from his son, far from it. But it was late and the storm was still running its course, what kind of father would allow his child to go out in those conditions? However one look in his son's eyes and he could tell that nothing was going to stop him tonight, what ever it was he was planning on doing.

"Very well, Haeden. At least tell us where you're going." said Severus, hoping to make a compromise.

Haeden thought about it. Should he tell them? After all this was something personal and he didn't think they would understand. But then he saw the look in his mother's eyes and the worry that was masked behind the older man's stoics and he felt compelled to inform them, if only a bit of the truth.

"Grimmauld Place." he answered in the end.

Severus' eyes widened in surprise, of all the places the boy wanted to go late at night, he had decided to head straight for the enemy's nest?

"You want to go to the headquarters of the Order? Have you lost your mind?" Snape stared at his son as if he'd grown an extra head.

"I'm perfectly sane, thank you very much." commented Haeden snidely.

"Do you have any idea how dangerous this plan of yours is? Dumbledore is searching high and low for you, and you're planning to just walk into Grimmauld Place?" Snape asked, trying to figure out the logic in his son's actions.

"I'm not planning to just walk into Grimmauld Place and I can just use my powers, Selene's already taught me a few spells." said Haeden.

"But Haeden, childe," Lily began, walking towards her soon. "It's dangerous. It's late. I'm sure whatever it is you want to do can wait until later."

"When? When something life changing happens to me again? When can I ever do something that I want that is not dictated by someone

else? I'm sick and tired of it, so why don't you just let me go." intoned Haeden.

"I'll go with him." Selene suddenly said, putting a stop to Haeden's rising temper. Three heads turned at once towards the dark-haired girl. "I'll make sure he doesn't get into trouble."

"Selene!" Lily said more in surprise.

"If he desperately wants to go, just let him. We won't be able to stop him anyway, he's blessed with both of your stubborn natures." said Selene with a smirk.

"But to Grimmauld Place?" argued Lily feebly, turning towards her son, pleading. Haeden shied away from the look, preferring not to get drawn into their depths.

"I'll return," he said, surprising himself in the process, but a small part of him wanted to assuage the woman's worries.

"I don't doubt that, son." she said softly, catching Haeden off guard with her smile. "It's what Dumbledore could do if he finds out you've been to Headquarters that I worry of."

Severus placed a comforting hand on his wife's arm and spoke, "Very well, it seems that nothing we say will stop you tonight. However, it will be I who will be accompanying you to Grimmauld place."

"What?" Haeden blanched. "But Selene's already offered to follow me. What more do you want?"

"Though I have complete confidence in Selene's capabilities, she cannot aid you in this." replied Severus.

"Why?" asked Haeden.

Severus walked away from his wife and went straight for something in his desk drawers. He pulled something small and old, but before Haeden could get a better look at what it was, the man had pocketed it in his robes. "You can no longer enter the Headquarters unless you're an Order member. Ever since the events in June and your recent disappearance, Dumbledore has heightened all of his

defences, making sure that Voldemort does not get wind of its location." explained Snape, striding back towards the group by the fireplace.

"How will we get there?" asked Haeden, watching the man intently as he made various preparations for their departure.

"We will need to Floo to a safe house before Apparating to London, this place is spelled to repel any forms of wizard travel and is near impossible to find, because as far as the wizards are concerned, this place does not exist." said Snape. "Come along, they should all be asleep by now."

Haeden took small hesitant steps towards the man, his nerves gritting at him, perhaps this was not a good idea after all. He had not expected for Snape to accompany him and he worried if he would be able to keep it civil with the man. A thousand conflicting thoughts raced through his head; he was determined to hate the man for as long as he lived, but what he'd seen earlier and what he was seeing now went against all that he'd first convinced himself to believe.

Snape held out a pot of Floo powder for him and he saw that instead of the usual white powder, the pot held glittering gold particles. He grabbed a handful of the powder and looked up in question to the older Vampyre.

"It works just like a regular Floo powder, though you need not speak of the destination because this powder will only take you to the safe house." explained Snape, taking a bit of the powder himself.

A clap of thunder disrupted them, making them all turn in unison towards the brutal storm that lay just beyond the protection of the stone walls. Lily frowned at the sight before averting her eyes from the storm and turning them instead on her son and husband, "Be careful," she stated softly.

"We'll be back soon." said Severus. "Selene, you know what to do."

Selene nodded her head in reply and wrapped her hands around her mother's anxious body. "As soon as you leave."

Severus gestured for Haeden to go first and when the boy tossed the powder into the roaring fire, the flames turned a brilliant shade of

blue, the colour of the sky. Haeden stepped into the grate, expecting the flames to give out a bit of heat but he felt nothing. In fact it felt as if he'd just stepped into a rather humid room, it made him a bit itchy, but not so much as to cause discomfort. However before he could so much as think more of his discomfort, the flames had swept him away. Just like as he would in a normal Floo, he caught sight of various grates from different homes, but unlike normal Floo, the grates in this Floo were undoubtedly larger and far grander, and if he wasn't mistaken he was certain he'd seen someone with flowing blonde hair and long pointed ears.

The journey through the Floo was longer than he'd expected and by the time he'd landed, his legs felt like jelly and his eyes stung, having forgotten to close them throughout the journey. Luckily he'd managed to land, albeit shakily, on his feet and he dusted himself of the soot he'd gathered in the grate. Based on what he could see in the room he'd arrived in, his first impression of the safe house was that it belonged to someone with an eccentric sense of style. None of the colours in the room matched and hanging on the wall before him was a distorted image of a man. The longer he stared at the room, the more the bright colours hurt his eyes and just as he was about to move away from the open grate to avoid a collision with his professor, he heard the gruff sound of someone clearing their throat.

He turned around and noticed for the first time a man with dirty blonde hair dressed in way that matched the room they were in. The man seemed surprise to find him standing there, but before he could question the man, the grate lit up once more and his professor emerged from the grate, standing proud and tall. The professor stood there for awhile, searching the room for something. Apparently it was the blonde man he was searching for as Snape walked towards him.

"I trust Selene was able to contact you in due time." inquired the professor.

"Yes, My Lord," Haeden's brow furrowed in confusion as the blonde man, who appeared older than his professor, bowed his head at the dark haired man. "The hold on the gates will be strengthened in your absence."

"Thank you, my friend." said Snape. "Come on Haeden, you won't have much time." Haeden followed the man out of the safe house, a

million questions wanting to burst forth from his mind. They passed by more peculiar objects as they exited their house and more questions burned through Haeden's head like, 'Why did the man bow to Snape?', 'What gate were they talking about?' and 'Who lives here?'

Surprisingly when they got outside, the weather was clear and not a hint of the storm they had left just minutes ago. Haeden checked out his surroundings and found himself standing before a normal looking two storey house in the middle of the country. Ahead of them the fields stretched on as far as he could see and the sky was such a cloudless beauty that they were standing below a star dused sky.

"Where are we?" he asked his professor.

"Somewhere in Devon." replied the man absentmindedly, stretching out his hand. "Now, I want you to take my hand."

"What?" cried Haeden, staring incredulously at the man.

"I will need to Apparate us to London." said the man with a slight edge in his voice. "Hurry."

Haeden glared at the man's tone of voice but took the offered hand, and for the first time in his life, he felt himself being forced into a tight rubber tube, sucking all of the air out of his lungs. The pressure was so great that he thought he would faint before he got through the ordeal. Once the sensation finally ended, he barely landed on his feet and knew from then on that Apparition was something he would find difficult to get accustomed to. Smoothing off his rumpled attire, he found that Snape was already halfway down the dark deserted street, his mouth upturned into a smirk.

"You could have at least warned me," protested Haeden, making his way to the awaiting professor.

"My apologies to you," said Severus, tilting an imaginary hat at that teen's direction, giving him a mock bow.

Haeden did not know whether to be annoyed or amused to see this side of the professor. He was saved however from replying when he came to stand in front of the dilapidated exterior of No.12 Grimmauld Place. This would be the first time he'd come this close to the house

after the death of the man he thought to have been his Godfather. He didn't know how to feel anymore about the death of the man, there had been a time when he was still Harry Potter and the loss had felt so great, so life altering that he'd wanted to leave it all behind. Now it felt just like one horrible nightmare.

Something oddly warm and comforting found itself on his shoulder that made his insides squirm in discomfort. Had the man beside him done this before all their lives had been drastically changed, he would have greatly welcomed the affection given to him. But since years of memory couldn't just be erased in a matter of days, even if he tried, Haeden pulled away from the comforting touch, unaware of the sadness that flickered on the professor's pale face.

Haeden crossed the streets, pulling at all of his nerves to get him through what he was about to do tonight. "Will they know I was here?" he asked, knowing that the professor was just right behind him.

"Yes, if we first do not disarm the spell that warns the occupants inside of someone entering who is not an Order member," said Severus, passing by Haeden to get to the door. "But I believe of all people here, you have every right to enter the premises, the mutt after all willed to you the place."

Haeden stopped in his tracks, staring unseeingly at his professor's form, a lump forming in his throat. "He what?" he was able to mumble.

Severus turned around to find that the boy was still in the middle of the streets, a pained expression on the youth's face. "Black, he named you as his inheritor in his will. Half of his possessions go to you, including the house. That is why Dumbledore heightened all of his defences when you disappeared; the headquarters was no longer safe since you, the owner, have not given your consent to use the house."

"You mean to tell me that I now own Grimmauld Place?" Haeden blurted out in shock, unable to reconcile with the fact.

"Yes," said Severus softly, watching the emotions that flashed on his son's face.



'Why'd you do that Sirius? I was not who you thought I was, I don't think I can do this.' The dull ache in Haeden's heart deepened, making it all the more difficult for him to step into the house and do what he'd set himself to do.

"I don't want the house," stated Haeden seriously.

"There's nothing I can do about that, Haeden." answered Severus. "It's better this way."

"Why?" demanded Haeden, glaring at the man. He really did not want the house. He didn't want anything more to remind him of Harry Potter and all the pain that came with it.

"Your absence weakens the Order, Haeden, far too much than Dumbledore ever anticipated. Then add in Black's sentimentality of giving you the headquarters, he'd unknowingly given you power over the Order. Whether Black knew it or not, being the master of the house gave him power over what goes on in the house, and now he's passed that onto you. And we need that control Haeden. Dumbledore does not want to move out of the house, he loves the power and comfort the House of Black gives him. That is probably the reason why he insisted Black offer it as headquarters." Severus accented.

Haeden frowned. "Fine, nothing I say ever matters anyway, what's the big deal." Severus was about to comment when Haeden cut pass him to stand right in front of the door. "So how do we get in without them finding out it was me?"

"Stand aside," said Severus. He pulled out his wand together with the piece of parchment he had taken from the manor and tapped the door in an undistinguished pattern. Haeden heard the locks make several noisy clicks and soon enough the door swung open.

"After you," said Severus gesturing towards the dark hall that lay beyond the open door.

Haeden gave the man a determined look before walking into the darkness. As soon as Severus entered, the door closed behind them with a sharp snap, leaving them both in the dark.

"Oh great," came Haeden's voice somewhere in the darkness, "You could have at least turned on the —". But before he could finish his sentence, the lights came to life, illuminating them and the whole room. "Never mind," Severus fought the urge to roll his eyes at the young boy's attitude.

Haeden was about to go deeper into the house when a hand grabbed his arm, preventing him from making further progress. The hand then pulled him around and he came face to face with his intimidating professor.

"Let me go," he hissed furiously.

Severus raised his free arm and conjured up a blue silencing shield all over the room and then he released his hold on the boy. "I've gotten you into the house. But now I want you to tell me what you plan to do."

"Ever a Slytherin, aren't you? Well thank you for getting me here, you can leave now if you want, but what I do is my own business." said Haeden with a sneer.

"I'm you're father, and I deem it my business whatever it is you plan to commit tonight under Dumbledore's roof." Snape blurted.

"So now you act like a father, or are you just determined to make me hate you more?" snapped the boy.

Severus forced himself to remain unfazed by his son's words. "You will tell me Haeden, or I will get us out of here, so help me God."

Haeden bestowed his father with the most loathsome look he could muster. "You want to know Snape? It's because of Sirius. I want to avenge his death." he said acidly

"Black?" spat the man.

"Yes," he replied tartly. "Because he was more of a father than you'd ever been!"

Severus staggered backwards at the weight of those words, the little remains of his control slipping away to reveal a pair of black

disbelieving eyes. Haeden gave the man a final glowering look before turning away from the anguished eyes.

"KREACHER!" he called out loud.

Within seconds, an old grumpy looking house elf in dirty rags appeared before them. The old house elf stared wildly at the person before him. He had never seen him in his life, but there was something that told him that this person was to be feared.

"What does Master want from Kreacher?" grumbled the elf, his head bowed down so low his nose touched the stone floor.

Haeden crouched down to the same level as the elf and cocked his head from side to side, looking at the creature in disgust.

"I want you to pay Kreacher," he whispered dangerously causing the elf to spring up and stare wildly at him.

"Kreacher believes Kreacher does not understand," said the elf warily. "Kreacher never see Master before."

"I think you do Kreacher. You see you're the reason why the only man who cared for me not because of what I represent but simply because he thought I was his godson; that I was his, is gone. Do you know how nice that was, even though he had no idea who I really was, that he cared enough to care for me? But then you came and ruined it all for me."

"Potter!" cried the elf in recognition.

"Yes, Kreacher, I am the filthy half-blood your bitch of a Mistress referred to. Harry Potter come to avenge your previous master's death."

He stood up and rummaged his cloak for the medium sized wooden box he had brought along. Caressing it gently, he said in a dark voice, "But do you know what the weird thing is, Kreacher? I don't really care why you did that. I'm not even angry right now, and it's probably thanks to you that I finally know who I really am."

Kreacher tried to Apparate away from the raving raven haired boy but found that something was rooting him to the room, preventing

him from escaping. Haeden tutted in amusement, opening the box in his hands, "Did you really think I would let you escape that easily?"

Pulling the purple velvet cloth dramatically, the box revealed to contain a severely severed hand that twitched and jerked every now and then, oozing blood in its box. The Hand of Bereavement.

Severus couldn't help but gasp and stare at the Hand in awe. He had heard of such things during his travels throughout the years but never had he actually seen one up close, and to see that his son had managed to obtain one surprised him.

Haeden stroked the Hand as if it were the most precious thing in the world, tracing the welts and sores with his fingers before allowing his hand to be scratched by the Hand's sharp nails. His hand bled profusely for some time before it was magically healed and the Hand, once having received his offering of blood, jerked to life, standing on its blood stained nails.

"Goodbye Kreacher," he uttered feelingly.

The Hand leapt from its box and landed straight on to the elf's bald head, making him fall to the ground.

Kreacher's eyes were wide as saucers and screamed for all it was worth but the more the condemned elf struggled, the tighter the Hand's hold on him got. The Hand's deadly sharp fingers then latched itself on the elf's neck, digging deep until the elf started gurgling blood in his own mouth, staining the floors with the thick liquid.

Haeden, his eyes a chilling gleam as he watched the elf struggle for his life, pulled out a dagger from within his robes and tossed it out in the air. The Hand caught the small silver dagger and immediately plunged it first into the elf's leg, slowly making its way up. It all looked like one flawlessly horrific dance, the Hand keeping time to a non-existent rhythm, randomly plunging and retracting both the dagger and its nails, sending blood flying in frenzy in all directions. As the minutes dragged on, the screams turned into meaningless pleading cries and the erratic movements into occasional twitching, and pretty soon it all stopped; the hand ceased its fatal blows, releasing the dagger in a clattering fall. And the elf laid lifelessly, its

eyes locked in a perpetual horrified stare, pooling dark red blood all over the floor.

Haeden knelt down, pulling out a white handkerchief to clean the bloody dagger and stuffing both of them back into his cloak. He then pulled out the purple velvet cloth from the box and wrapped it around the now still Hand.

Severus watched the whole macabre scene with critical eyes. It was only his years worth of experience in the field as a spy that prevented him from turning away and emptying the contents of his stomach on the stone floor. His eyes were still locked on the mutilated form of the elf when he heard the sharp snap of the box closing over the damned object, causing him to turn his gaze to his son who had a dangerous glint in his eyes. It was something he himself had seen on various occasions during the war and he'd hoped that his son did not have to go through something that would ultimately taint his innocence. However Severus knew he was merely deluding himself for believing that Haeden was still innocent, because if there were a list going around of who in the world was still innocent, he and his family would definitely be right at the bottom of the rung. The world was not a pretty place and it seemed that those born with something more special rarely retain innocence for longer than what is advisable for a filling life.

"Where did you get that?" asked Severus, not taking his eyes off his son.

"I bought it," Haeden answered vaguely, stowing the box back in his robes.

"Last time I checked people don't sell cursed artefacts to minors, let alone an object such as the Hand of Bereavement." said Severus, not buying one bit the boy's explanation.

"I might have coerced the man, don't tell me you're going to ground me for it?" said Haeden, tauntingly

Severus was completely at a lost for what to say, though this was going too far. The boy may not accept his authority as of yet, but that didn't mean it didn't exist. He was the son, and he was still the father; and as far as he knew that entailed for him to have a large say on his son's actions.

"Listen here, Haeden, I regret not being able to protect you better from Dumbledore or allowing you to think that I hated you. But that does not change the fact that I am you're father and you are my son. You may continue hating me all you want, but I am not going anywhere." said Severus, his onyx eyes boring deeply into his son's emerald ones.

Haeden walked away from the professor, not trusting himself to speak at the moment. He had not expected an apology from Snape and he didn't know how to react to it.

"I'm ready to leave now." he said rather hoarsely after composing himself.

Severus nodded, sweeping over to the elf's corpse to clean up all the blood that had splattered haphazardly around the room, using as little Magyck as possible. Over the years, Dumbledore had had come to know of their Magyck and knew exactly what to look for when searching for one of them. It was probably better that Haeden had turned to an enchanted object to perform his revenge as Dumbledore would have difficulty in finding out what had happened here tonight. He was also not worried that some of his signatures could be traced in the scene. Dumbledore already knew he was a Clandestine and he could excuse his Magyck's presence quite easily, he had after all attended an Order meeting not too long ago and Magyckal signatures linger longer than that of wizard magic.

The last thing that Severus removed before leaving the headquarters was the Silencing Shield he had cast over the room. As soon as it was removed, Severus pulled out his wand and caused a few more damages that would make it look like it was the Death Eaters who had attacked the headquarters and not them. Once he had created ample mayhem, the two Vampyres left the house, leaving behind a trail of destruction for the inhabitants of Grimmauld Place to find in the morning.

A/N: You know i haven't done this in a really really long while, but this author is once again asking you for your reviews. I won't be able to make the best out of this story is i don't hear your input... So please please leave your reviews behind. good or bad i'll take them in...

read and review...

'til next post.

dan4eva

## Chapter 19 Friend or Foe?

"Tell me again why you're following me," said Haeden to the female Vampyre sitting across him. The professor had purposely dropped them off the platform the following morning an hour before all the other students were to arrive hoping to avoid the crowd and the Order who would surely come to see if Harry Potter would be coming back to Hogwarts. Before they departed from their in-between-planes stone manor Snape had given him a potion to drink that instantly turned him back to his previous self. Then his mother cast a powerful incorruptible charm that would ensure that the potion doesn't wear off without him first being administered the potion that would turn him back. He knew he had to return to Hogwarts looking like Harry Potter but he couldn't help but feel angry at seeing his old self again after all that had happened to him. However the most surprising thing that had happened that morning was when he found Selene standing at the bottom of the stairs, her uncanny smirk in place and with a trunk of her own.

"Did you honestly think that they would send you back to the old man all alone?" said Selene, making herself comfortable in their compartment. So far only a few people were in the Express and Haeden had chosen a compartment that was located at the very end of the train, so that they wouldn't meet any unwanted visitors.

"Well that sure is an addition to my vast knowledge of our situation," replied Haeden, arms crossed over his chest, his voice dripping with sarcasm.

"Yeah, well someone has to keep you in line," said the girl flippantly. "Can't have your temper ruining everything, now can we?"

Haeden groaned, just what he needed. "So how are we going to explain the fact that I somehow know you?"

"But you don't know me." said Selene smilingly.

"I don't know you..." Haeden repeated uncertainly.

"No you don't. I'm Selene Freighter, 16 years old, home-schooled from the age 8 and we met on the train. Nice to meet you." Selene extended her left hand to him.



Haeden stared at his sister, in the time he'd spent with her in the manor; he still could not decipher the patterns of her ever volatile moods. One moment she's all shady, secretive and extremely pushy and the next thing he knew she was a walking talking bag of sarcasm and criticism. And apparently today was annoyingly perky day. Joy.

"Nice to meet you too," He took the hand and shook it, going along with the other's act. "So that's our story."

"Easy and simple, Dumb-old-dore will not find anything suspicious at that."

"Let's hope so. I'm not particularly keen on having my mind and free-will controlled again..."

"Just maintain your act. Don't do anything that you wouldn't do before and for extra measure, just try not be with the old man for longer than what is necessary." said Selene, her voice taking on a serious edge.

The minutes dragged on and the platform soon started filling out with frantic parents fussing over their children and children eagerly trying to get away from their parents in fear of being embarrassed in front of their friends. As he glanced out of the window of their compartment, he was sure he caught sight of a group of red-haired folks lingering by the gateway. As he and Selene were located near the end of the train, not many people had come by their door, but he was certain that anytime now someone would come in and then their act would begin. His eyes caught that of Selene's and saw that her grey ones were thinking along the same line.

He hadn't realized until now just how dangerous it was for the female Vampyre to be here or him for that matter. If Dumbledore ever found out of the charade they were pulling under his nose, he shuddered to think of having to submit to the man again.

"What if Dumbledore breaks through the illusion they placed in my mind?" he asked suddenly. His mother, with the help of Snape, had placed a fake image in his mind which acted more like an Occlumency shield to throw Dumbledore off if he ever did try to

check whether his 'other-self' was still in the prison he had created so many years ago.

Selene sat upright on her seat and levelled him with her intense gaze. "As long as he thinks you are still submissive to his will, he will not think about checking your mind for anything else. Dumbledore is too confident in his abilities to even consider the fact that the Clandestines are on to him once again. For all he knows, the Clandestines still believe in your mother's betrayal and that the only person who knows what he did to you is dead."

However he was still uneasy about the whole thing. He was both mad and scared at what Dumbledore could do to him, and it wouldn't be easy to take that fear away. He knew only too well the feeling of helplessness, of not being able to fight and get out of the darkness. He was quite surprised that his imprisonment had not rendered him fearful of the dark. Selene must have seen the trepidation in his eyes because at that instant she did something she had never done before.

Selene had been watching the boy the entire time and could see that he was agitated at what they were about to do. She couldn't honestly fault him for being suspicious or even afraid of setting foot once more into the place he'd once thought he was safest of all only to find out that it actually served as his own prison cell. It was beginning to make her uncomfortable seeing him helpless like this, as if they had thrown him into the lion's pit and expected him to get out of it on his own. But how could she assure him when she herself was not one hundred percent certain they could pull this off?

Haeden tensed ever so slightly when Selene left her seat to sit beside him, her hand placed awkwardly on his leg. He slowly lifted his eyes and found that she too was finding this position awkward; however her eyes were determined about something.

"You're not alone Haeden," she began, grasping for the right words to say. "We're here for you now. You may not accept some of the things that have happened but know that none of us are leaving. I could never imagine what it's like to have one's control and will taken away but I won't let it happen again. You're... you're my brother and I'll keep you safe."

Haeden didn't know what to say, but was there really any words necessary to say? He looked into her misty eyes and knew that she had looked into his and seen all the things he had no words to articulate. He took the hand on his leg and gripped it lightly, "Thank you."

"Don't mention it," smiled the other, gripping the hand as well, though with slightly a bit more force. The distinct sound of popping bones then ensued.

Haeden pulled out his hand in shock and stared at Selene incredulously, flexing his fingers. "I think I'd prefer it if both my hands are functional."

Selene laughed heartily, returning to her seat across the boy, and soon after Haeden joined her as well. She smile inwardly, she had done well.

The Express filled out by the minute with more and more students, but fortunately their end of the train remained quite and void of any unwanted intruders. But it was when the train was well out of the platform did their compartment door slide open and Haeden found himself ensconced by someone with bushy brown hair.

The intrusion to his private person caught him so much by surprise that he was unable to prepare himself from the onslaught of human scent that bombarded his sensitive nose. He had to forcefully avert his watering mouth away from the witch's exposed neck and gripped the seat's upholstery so tightly he feared he might actually rip it off. He hadn't believed Selene at first when she told him that human blood was more tempting and appetizing to a Vampyre like him, but now as Hermione's flesh was but a inch from his mouth, he wanted nothing more than to sink his teeth into the large vein that seem to pulsate in time with his, calling on to him.

"Oh Harry!" cried Hermione, her voice muffled by his shirt. "You had us so worried."

She was so close; he could already feel the venom building in his mouth, his muscle taut in preparation to strike. But when he thought he had completely given in, he found one last ounce of control and brought his hands up, shoving Hermione away from him. "I'm sorry," he growled throatily, "I need a moment alone."

"But Harry –," he heard Hermione cry out. However he was already out of the corridor and looking for some place he could gather himself before having to stay in close proximity of humans.

He found an empty corridor three doors away from his and entered, pounding on the closest solid object he could find – the seats. His breathing was short and laboured, trying to fight off the thirst that still burned fiercely in his throat. He'd thought that the scent of blood was intoxicating, but this, the strong scent of human blood that had placed itself completely at the mercy of his hands, it completely aroused the animal that he wasn't.

Selene was wrong, he couldn't do this. He wasn't ready.

He tried once more to clear his lungs of the pungent scent of blood but it seemed that the human scent had clung onto his robes. He hastily removed it from his person and flung it across the room as if it were some vile object. But the scent still lingered and it was driving him mad.

He didn't know for how long he'd stayed in the compartment but he knew that the longer he was gone, the more suspicious Hermione and Ron were going to get.

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Selene knew that the moment the two Gryffindors arrived would spell trouble for all of them and she was proven right when the female threw herself into Haeden's lap. The scent of two fresh human bodies so close to her sent her senses hammering, begging to be let loose. However she had had more time in controlling herself and had far more experience that she was able to subdue the animalistic urges away from the fore of her mind. Haeden, however, had not.

The younger Vampyre was caught completely off guard that she was surprised he didn't immediately attack her then and there. But then she was also glad that Haeden had more self-control than she credited him for or else they would all be done for.

She saw his eyes dilate and then lighten in surprise, unquenchable thirst tangible in his green eyes. As she saw all of this, she had a

sudden fierce urge to shove away the horrible human away from her brother and save him from what she knew to be an extremely painful situation. However before she could get up from her seat, Haeden had bolted up and out of sight.

"But Harry –," Hermione cried out, attempting to follow Haeden out of the room.

"I wouldn't follow him if I were you," she said all of a sudden, alerting the humans for the first time of her presence.

Ron and Hermione turned in shock at the sound of her voice; she hadn't realized she had spoken harshly. The two Gryffindors stared at her and she immediately saw the suspicion in their eyes. It was Hermione who first broke the tense silence.

"Who are you?" she demanded imperiously.

"Who wants to know?" she demanded in the same tone. She already knew who everyone was in the damned school or to be more precise, those who thought they knew Haeden. But she didn't like the smell of the girl the moment she caught her scent and how having caught sight of her, her dislike was fuelled even more.

She then turned her eyes on Weasley, his earlier awkwardness in the presence of his friend now gone only to be replaced by that of a calculating look. He was watching her closely but allowing his friend to do the talking, which was rather unusual for the ever loud-mouthed Gryffindor. Her elegant brows knotted in confusion, she would have to keep an eye on these two.

All of her observations happened in less than two seconds and by the time she had reverted her attention back to the Muggle-born, the girl was still staring intently at her.

"We're Harry's best friends, what makes you think you know more than us." said Hermione, unusually domineering.

"I don't," she replied, keeping up her casual front. "But I do know that when someone says they need a moment alone; they need to be alone for a moment."

Granger stared angrily at her but stood her ground. Selene knew the girl to follow her head far more than her heart, the only trait in her that the Vampyre found redeeming in the present situation.

Weasley however was not appeased. "You haven't exactly told us who you are."

"You haven't either, so you can't fault me for returning the same courtesy," she replied, watching the two as closely as she could.

"You're not a Hogwarts student," stated Granger, coming onto her again, staring at her from head to toe.

"No, I'm not." affirmed Selene, keeping up with her appearance; there was no need to cause them to doubt her so early in the game. "I was home-schooled for years."

Granger and Weasley seem to buy her story so far, but she would have to remain low key so as not to arouse their interest further. Severus was not allowed to get too near the boy whilst under the old coot's nose so it was her utmost duty to keep Haeden safe and not to interfere unless it was absolutely necessary and she needed anonymity for that. And it meant not having the eyes of the Gryffindors and most especially the Headmaster on her.

The two Gryffindors now seated themselves opposite her on the seat Haeden had vacated earlier. She had her eyes averted from them, looking far away into the mountains in the horizon, worrying about the young Vampyre. The delicious scent of human blood was interfering dangerously with her; causing her to sneak a few longing glances at the Gryffindors' necks and in one occasion where Granger was humming softly to her hideous cat, she had a violent vision of seeing herself twisting the girl's neck and draining her of the delicious liquid before turning her silver eyes upon her next prey. Luckily for the two unfortunate humans, Severus had been teaching her Occlumency for years and that she had hammered onto herself the control and patience of a saint – well most of the time – that she was able to subdue most of her yearnings deep, deep down. But she would need to hunt before the end of the day if she wanted to remain sane in the presence of so many humans.

Haeden had not been gone for more than thirty minutes but Weasley and Granger were starting to get worried and pretty soon they would

turn their irritation on her again. She had not been oblivious to the guarded looks they had been throwing at her when they thought she wasn't looking. She was certain that if Haeden had not returned in time, Weasley would have been the first to crack, seeing as that he was no longer being discrete with his glances.

Selene glanced swiftly at Haeden, taking in that he was now robeless and that his knuckles were slightly battered and bruised. Further up, she also noticed how his breathing was low and controlled, like he was trying to get in as little air as possible, but she was glad to see that his eyes were no longer dilated and were once again back to a normal emerald colouring. She gave off a subtle sigh of relief that didn't go unnoticed by the dark haired youth.

"I hope you're feeling better," she intoned softly, bringing the attention of the two Gryffindors towards the door.

"I'm sorry about that, guys," said Haeden shakily and timidly, running his hand through his messy mop.

"Harry..." said Granger in a surprisingly concerned voice. She got up from her seat and tentatively walked over to Haeden before pulling him once more into her bear of a hug.

Selene watched Haeden's reaction this time, noting how his breathing hitched up a bit but his face remained a controlled timid. However she did discern how he was trying to keep the contact as brief as possible when he gently pushed her away.

"Harry, mate, what's wrong?" asked Weasley, standing beside Granger.

"Er... I... I needed time to think, it was just too overwhelming for me," replied Haeden, dodging their approaching forms to sit beside Selene, wary of their proximity to his person.

"Harry, are you really okay?" asked Hermione, sitting opposite of the Clandestine pair.

"I'm okay Hermione, I was just a little rattled." said Haeden in forced apprehension. He tried not to show his discomfort when Hermione gripped his hand in what he thought was a reassuring act from the girl.

"Oh, Harry," articulated Hermione. Selene tried not to show her utter dislike of the girl.

"Mate, you got us all real worried when you ran away like that. Where did you go?" Ron pounded in at once.

"Here and there," he replied. "I guess couldn't take it anymore guys, I had to get away."

"Couldn't take what, Harry?" Hermione pressed on, leaning closer to him. Haeden made a show of looking wary and ashamed before replying in a resigned voice.

"Sirius," he said simply.

Ron and Hermione leaned back on their seats in surprise, freeing up Haeden's personal space. "It was just too much for me, I was distraught and I didn't think you would understand."

"Mate, you should have told us nonetheless. We would have helped you get through it. We miss him too Harry, we know how you feel." said Ron sympathetically.

"I was just really confused Ron, he... he was family, the only one I had left. Surely you understand." said Haeden, pass the lump that had formed in his throat.

"Harry, I do. I would feel confused and distraught too if my parents died like that," Ron eyed him with sincere sadness.

"We should write to the Order right away and tell them that you're safe." said Hermione in suggestion, looking extremely uncomfortable and sneaking curious glances at Selene. "They were checking the platform to see if you'd be returning to Hogwarts but they unfortunately didn't see you,"

"Could you... could you do it later on? And I'm sure once Dumbledore sees me in the feast, he'd know that I returned safely." said Haeden at once, he had no intention of informing the Order of his return earlier than what was necessary; let Dumbledore sweat a little longer.



"But, Harry –," argued Hermione, but cut off immediately, glancing nervously at Selene. Haeden followed her gaze.

Selene had silently been following their conversation and caught enough of the two Gryffindors' glances at her to know that they were uncomfortable with her presence in the same compartment. If they wanted to leech them of information, they would have to feel safe and comfortable that Haeden was still Harry.

"Harry, if you'll excuse me, I'll just go and explore the train for a bit," said Selene, getting on her feet. She saw the look of trepidation return to his eyes but the Gryffindors were still eyeing her closely and therefore settled to sending her brother a bit of her aura, ensuring him that she would be close by.

Haeden nodded reluctantly; there was nothing he could do about Selene's departure in front of Ron and Hermione.

"Harry, who is she?" Hermione asked the moment the door slid shut behind the Vampyre.

"She's Selene Freighter, I met her earlier." he replied, animated for the first time.

"Do you know anything about her?" questioned Hermione.

"Not much. But I do know that this is her first time going to Hogwarts." replied Haeden. Now that the female Vampyre was out of the room, he was finding it harder to maintain his control over his senses. Unbeknownst to his two friends, Selene had been helping him subdue his senses ever since he returned, knowing that it would take a while longer before he could confidently stay with humans all on his own. He just hoped that they reach the castle soon.

"She was rather pushy earlier when you left." remarked Ron.

"Was she?" Haeden feigned ignorance.

"She was very much so," agreed Hermione. "I don't think it's wise for you to hang out with her, Harry."

"And why is that?" demanded Haeden, honestly interested on what the girl had to say.

"Well for one, we don't know who she is or where she comes from." stated Hermione. "She could just be trying to reel you in for all we know."

"How can you say that? You don't even know her!" said Haeden.

"Neither do you, Harry." said Hermione.

"But that does not give you the right to judge her." cried Harry.

Ron leaned towards him for the first time and said, "Mate, what's wrong with you? You just met the girl and you're defending her more than us, your best friends."

"I just don't like the way you guys are immediately labelling her as an enemy." said Harry, deciding to tone down his attitude a bit.

"No one is labelling anyone, Harry. We just want to make sure you're safe." said Hermione gently, placing her hand ones more on his hand, much to his great displeasure.

"I'm not a kid who needs constant watch Hermione!" intoned Harry, removing her hand from their reach. "I know if the person is good or not, and I know Selene is not what you're implying."

"Mate, you can't blame us for suspecting her. You went missing for a month, none of us knew where you were and now you're here together with a girl none of us know of. We have every right to be suspicious of who she is and what she's doing here." said Ron, clearly not liking his disposition as well.

"I had to get away. I couldn't stand staying in my uncle's house while my thoughts swirled around Sirius. I thought you understood that!" Haeden's voice had taken a mournful tone, his dark expression staring deeply into both their eyes.

"Harry, we do. But you can't remove the fact that we had no idea where you were or if you were in danger. We just want to protect you, Harry." said Hermione.

The train continued to rattle on its tracks, sending them bouncing up and down their seats every now and then. But the bumpy ride did

not hinder Haeden from really looking at the two before him. From the things they'd told him, he'd yet to find any reason to believe that they were not on his side. But the mere fact that neither of them had said anything about what they'd sent him during his birthday prevented him from being any less brusque with them.

"I can protect myself." he stated firmly, sitting up straight to look closer at his friends.

"Harry, please be reasonable." mumbled Hermione with a frown.

"I am being reasonable, Hermione. Times are dark and with Voldemort attacking left, right and centre, shouldn't we be promoting friendship instead of discord? You said that yourself last year. What's changed?" Haeden hurled the questions in quick succession at the girl.

"Don't be naïve, Harry. We don't even know who she is."

Haeden had heard enough. Nothing of interest would be known today and he was tired of their ramblings. He could tell that they sincerely wanted to keep Harry safe but he couldn't help but ask himself, 'what were they trying to protect him from?' There was something about how they persistently wanted him to stay away from Selene, not even relenting for a compromise to get to know the girl. He knew Selene was not the easiest person to get along with but to immediately come to conclusion that she was not good for him; that was another thing all together.

"Alright, Hermione, lets just drop it." said Haeden, unconsciously rubbing his throat.

"So you'll stay away from her?" asked Hermione, the eagerness in her voice evident to his sensitive ears.

"I'm not promising anything, Hermione." Haeden said nonchalantly.

"But, Harry..."

"Please Hermione, let's drop it. I don't want us all to fight over something like this." He graced her with the full force of his green eyes; eyes he knew that were perpetually expressive in his old body. He just hoped that he was conveying the right emotions to pull this

off. It was surprising how a month as Haeden had erased some of Harry's characteristics from him. There were still some aspects of his old self that remained with him as Haeden, but he was more Haeden now than Harry.

Ron and Hermione smiled at him while Hermione lunged herself at his person again. Fortunately this time Ron pulled Hermione off of him before his control wavered any further.

"We've missed you so much Harry. We were so scared when Dumbledore told us you were missing from the Dursleys." said Hermione once she'd gotten a hold of herself.

"I've missed you too, guys." he replied, finding little libel in his words. "Can we stop fighting now?"

"Sure thing mate, it was all Hermione after all." said Ron boldly, garnering a sharp slap on the back of the head from the said girl.

"Real loyal, Ronald." drawled Hermione.

Haeden couldn't help but smirk at the interplay between his friends. Yes he was still mad at them for the things they'd said and done, but for right now, he was Harry, and after a month of drama in his life, he'd missed this light-hearted interaction between Ron and Hermione. Perhaps he would give them another chance and maybe after sometime they too could be included in his secret. If they wouldn't go running and screaming first, that is.

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The rest of the train ride passed by in amicable silence with Haeden mostly keeping to himself. Even though he now felt more in tune with his previous self, there was still the underlying desire to sink his teeth into his friends' necks and angry though he may be with them, he had no desire to harm them or reveal himself to them this early. Lucky for him, Ron and Hermione had sensed his desire to be left and alone and contented themselves with playing a game of chess, leaving him to his own silent devices. Though a few sidelong glances escaped the two Gryffindors, Haeden took them in stride; Harry after all was their best friend and was supposed to be comfortable in their presence, not the other way around.

By the time night finally set in, Haeden was slowly losing his battle with control and he immediately took the chance to get out of the confining space when Hermione told them to go and get change.

"We should change into our robes guys, we'll be arriving soon." said Hermione.

"I think I'll go find my robes now," Haeden stood up from his seat and made his way to the door.

"You should have gone and looked for it earlier Harry, instead of sitting here and watching Ronald and I playing chess." chastised the brown haired Gryffindor.

"You just don't like that I'm better than you in chess, Hermione." said Ron smugly, keeping his ancient chess set.

Hermione rolled her eyes, "How ever did you lose your robe anyway, Harry?"

Haeden sucked his cheeks inwards, his hidden fangs drawing blood. "Must have unconsciously removed earlier. I should go find it before some else claims it for their own."

"Maybe Ron should go with," suggested Hermione all of a sudden just before he could finally exit the compartment.

"I should?" Ron raised his brows in uncertainty.

"Hermione, I'll only be looking for my robes in the other compartments, I don't really think Ron's company would be helpful." cried Haeden, irritated at the girl's insistence of keeping him safe. "Plus he doesn't know where I left my robes; he'll only hinder my search."

"I guess you're right," conceded Hermione. "But do be careful."

A rhetorical remark was ready in his tongue but bit it back in the last minute and instead said with gritted teeth. "I will." It took an extremely large amount of control on his behalf to prevent himself from slamming the door shut in sheer irritation. He dashed up to the nearest empty compartment and opened its window before hanging

his head out, breathing in the cool scent of evening air that partially cleansed his air passages of human scent.

"You survived." said an amused voice from somewhere behind him.

"No thanks to you," he replied, not bothering to face the female Vampyre.

"Will that always be the gratitude I get from you every time I help you?" said Selene in a teasing tone.

Haeden kept his comments to himself, controlling his urges had worn him thin and therefore knew full well that he had nothing nice to say to the Clandestine. It was only when something warm was pressed into his hand did he look up to face his sister.

"We'll have to find a way to sneak you out tonight to join me in hunting but this should tide you in until then." answered Selene to his questioning looks.

He stared in disbelief at the warm goblet in his hands. "But how... Where did you get this?"

Selene flashed a cryptic smile. "I have my sources." She then waved her hand over the mouth of the goblet and the strong smell of blood that had earlier been concealed reached his sensitive nose. Placing the full cup closer to the tip of his nose, Haeden breathed in the sweet smell of blood until every part of his body craved nothing more than the irony taste of blood.

"Lesson number one, when in less than desirable situations, one should learn never to play with their food." said Selene in mock seriousness, watching how Haeden took a whiff of the much needed liquid.

Haeden's head snapped directly at Selene's and graced her with a glare that was worth of his father. "What?" she cried incredulously.

"I'm not in the mood Selene, so snuff it!" Haeden exclaimed.

"Fine!" said Selene in a patronizing voice before pulling out a rolled up piece of cloth from out of nowhere. "Here's your robe back and don't worry, it's free of that human's scent. I made sure of it."

Haeden took the bundle and tucked it comfortably under his arm. "Thanks."

"Don't mention it. You should vanish that goblet once you've drained it." smiled Selene. "See you later."

"You aren't going back with me to the compartment?" asked Haeden.

"Haeden, you and I both know that miss bushed up hair there hates the sight of me. It'll be best if she doesn't know of our interactions." explained the female Vampyre.

"She doesn't hate you." Haeden found himself defending the witch.

Selene raised a brow in surprise. "I have a fair bit more sense of what a person is thinking than you. So just trust me when I say that I know she hates me. Okay?"

"But if you'd..." began Haeden only to be stopped by Selene's sudden livid expression.

"Stop it Haeden! Not another word. My plans do not include befriending Granger nor will it ever will. If you still treat her as a friend, that is your business, I will not meddle in it. But do not try to push me, Haeden, to do something I do not want to." snapped Selene before leaving the compartment and moving towards the other side of the train.

Haeden could only state in shock at Selene retreating form, unsure of what had sure transpired. More students were now bustling out of their compartments and Haeden was once more made aware of the time. He drank the warm liquid hungrily and instantly his body felt more refreshed and his senses much more relaxed than they were before. He knew he needed more blood in his system to be able to function normally in the presence of humans but for now he was strong enough to go back to Ron and Hermione.

When he opened the door to their compartment, he was immediately assailed by Ron and Hermione's bickering voices. He sighed heavily, feeling a headache coming along together with his thirst. He'd decided to give the two of them a chance and in the process had an argument with his sister, but if it was their bickering he had to live

through everyday, he wondered whether he could still take back his words.

A/N: Please pardon any errors in the story as I have yet to find a Beta for Dark Secrets. I'm not perfect and therefore can't guarantee that this fic will be error free. I try to stick with the fic's canon background and still stay true to my own plot and my characters characteristics but some errors just can't be avoided.

Any how, I don't want to upset anyone, but for Ron and Hermione fans, please be prepared that they will not be viewed nicely in this fic of mine. You have been warned...

Read and review...

'til next post.

dan4eva



## Chapter 20 Peculiar Encounters

The first of the autumn sunlight shone upon the desolate road that led up to Hogwarts castle. In a few hours time, the infamous institute would once again be the home to many underage wizards, and the house elves were in a hurry to make the Houses habitable once more while the professors that have been cooped up in the stone castle for the last week were trying to do last minute preparations in their lesson plans for the entire school year. Everything was going as it should on the morning of the first of September, except for the fact that Albus Dumbledore, current Headmaster of Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry, was absent, and he had been so for the last week. None but the Deputy Headmistress knew of his whereabouts and the others felt it imprudent to question her further.

But as it was very much unlike the Headmaster to abandon the castle so close to its opening, a certain dour professor couldn't help but feel a slight unease in the wizened wizard's prolonged absence. It had been hours since Severus last dropped his children off at Platform 93/4 under the guise of an elderly man and he was about to go on his way to his classroom to recheck his stock for the year when his personal house elf Apparated before him.

"What is it Zane? I still have many things to attend to before the lot of insolent brats arrive and I do not have much time for anything else." said Severus, sneering at the mere thought of returning students, that indicate the end of his peaceful summer solitude, and shuffling the parchments still on his desk.

"But Master has ordered Zane to report to him once the Headmaster arrives in the castle." replied the elf joyfully.

Severus cringed at the ebullient elf. He knew he would someday come to regret picking out this particular elf from amongst the lot he was given to choose from the day Dumbledore coerced him into teaching in castle. But Zane was the only elf in the whole place that he found hid a notoriously malicious streak behind an annoyingly cheerful disposition and Severus had no choice but to learn to tolerate its exuberance if he wanted a loyal elf at his disposal. He stopped halfway through replacing his lesson plans back in his desk and looked up expectantly at the tiny creature.

"Well, has he arrived?" snapped Severus impatiently, not particularly keen on spending his afternoon in the company of an exceedingly hyper elf.

"Zane heard word from the other elves in the kitchen that the Headmaster sir, arrived not an hour ago and has ordered for lunch to be served in a few minutes." said Zane, brimming with joy at the news he'd brought.

Severus couldn't not help but express a small sigh of relief; at least the old man was now back under his watch, he'd now just have to figure some way to find out where the Headmaster had been in the last week. Snapping his drawer shut, he turned to his elf once more, "Very well done, Zane, you may now go back to doing whatever it was you were doing before now."

The Potion Master was expecting to hear a loud pop to indicate the departure of the jolly elf but when none came, he looked up again and found his elf grinning mischievously at him. "Is there anything else you wish to tell me?" he asked the elf guardedly.

Unexpectedly, Zane walked up to him and upon reaching only his knee, Severus instinctively found himself bending down to the height of the house elf. "Will Master allow Zane to put laxatives in the headmaster's lemon drops?" the elf asked in acute eagerness, and if it was even possible, the elf was radiating enthusiasm more than the usual amount.

Severus stared at his personal elf in surprise and before he could think, blurted out quite loudly. "No, you are not to drug the Headmaster's lemon drops!" The eagerness in Zane's face fell immediately at Severus' words, dejection evident in his body language, and the lanky man found himself guilty and speechless.

"As you wish Master Severus, sir, Zane will take his leave now." But before the elf even had a chance of disappearing, Severus found his voice again and called out at the elf. Zane turned to look at him and he sighed, closing his eyes momentarily, he would surely come to regret what he would say next. Who'd ever heard of a master indulging his elf's malicious intents?

"You are not to drug the Headmaster, today. But –" The elf perked up at once. "... if the Headmaster exhibits actions you deem suspicious, I guess you can always... well say that an entire bottle slipped into bag of sweets without your prior knowledge. Will that do?"

Severus was prepared to receive a huge leap of joy from the elf, and if the worse came to the worse, an ear-splitting scream of ecstasy that could and would temporarily shatter his delicate ears. He was however unprepared for the cannon ball that had slammed right into his midriff and tiny hands encircling themselves around him.

"Oh Master Severus, sir, yous is the best master an elf could ever dream of. Zane is extraordinarily blessed to have to serve a great person such as Master Severus.," cried the exuberant elf, who's tight grip on Severus was quite literally depriving him of air.

Severus could do nothing but stare at the loyal creature hugging him to death and as soon as his lungs started to burn, he took hold of the wrinkled hands and pried them off of his robes. "There now, Zane, you're being utterly absurd! Either you cease this horrid sentimental act at once, or else I shall have no choice but to take back my words!" cried Severus which made the now weeping elf jump away from him. The wide smile on the elf's face was indeed a sight to behold.

"Zane does not care what they says about Vampyres, Master Severus, sir, is better than any other wizard Zane has ever worked for!" exclaimed the elf before Disappariting with a loud pop.

After Zane's teary departure from his office, Severus remained transfixed on the spot where his elf had just vanished to thin air, "Annoying, half-crazed, self-indulgent elves." he grubbed half-heartedly after awhile. "What have I ever done to deserve this?"

But as the thought of what exactly his elf wanted to do in the first place, he couldn't help but grin in amusement. Who'd ever thought that the great Albus Dumbledore would be thwarted by and elf and a bottle of laxatives? Severus laughed whole heartedly at the ludicrous scene that had started playing in his head and prayed that Lily would never find out just how much the crazed elf was growing on him. Oh, he would surely not hear the end of it. But as of right now, he had more important things to worry about than his elf and

wife; one of which was the safety of his children's journey and the other being the reason behind the Headmaster's week long absence. Exactly what could be so important for the old man to instantly leave everything at the drop of the hat and vanish without ever divulging his whereabouts to his faculty?

He needed to know...

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It is agreeable all throughout that if a man well acknowledge as all powerful and respectable; a revered leader, he is able to gain favours and achieve what needs to be achieved quite easily. But whoever came up with that notion clearly forgot to take into consideration that even extremely powerful men need pawns to make their bargains that much less of a hassle and that the lost of such a pawn contributes greatly to the decline of power.

Albus Dumbledore was a great example of such a man.

For two months now, he'd had to suffer the consequences of losing Harry from right under his nose. He hadn't expected for Harry to elude them for this long, in fact he had been confident in his assumptions that the boy would come seek his guidance not long after his running away. It was now the first of September, and not a hair of Harry had been spotted.

By now he was certain that Harry had somehow found aid and was lying low, but he was also not averse to thinking of the worse case scenario. Over and over again he played in his mind any possibilities that could have pulled the boy away from his commands, and each possibility was worse than the other. He'd hoped that Harry would appear in the platform today but he was once again proven wrong, and it was not a feeling he liked having.

"By the looks of your face, your schemes prove unsuccessful." intoned a gruff voice that pulled him out of his musing. He looked over his half moon glasses to find an old friend leaning against his door frame.

"Alastor," he mumbled wearily in greeting, pulling off his glasses and cleaning them with the sleeve of his robe.

"Aye, who else were you expecting," growled the ex-Auror, entering the premises of Dumbledore's circular office. The door shut with a snap behind him and he sat himself comfortable on one of the vacant seat before the Headmaster's desk. "Slughorn not being accommodating?"

"You have no idea!" cried Dumbledore, replacing his glasses back onto his broken nose. "I had hoped Harry would persuade him to come back to the castle but due to our present situation, I had to come up with other ways to get Horace. But he has chosen to live off the remainder of his life in the comforts of his numerous connections."

"A weak man!" exclaimed Moody.

"No my friend," said Dumbledore, shaking his head. "A smart man who is content to watch from the sidelines, where it is safe, but nevertheless advantageous."

Moody snorted, "You always had a way of painting people as how you want them to be viewed."

"We all have our faults, my friend, even I." said Dumbledore, his finger interlocked on top of his desk.

"Yes, yes, I have heard this before so can we skip the lecture and go into the part where you tell me why you had me summoned here when I know perfectly well you have a week's worth of paper work to accomplish." grunted Moody, his voice impatient.

Dumbledore rose from his seat and began pacing the length of the room. It was for awhile before he answered the Auror's question. "With Horace unwilling to return to the castle, we shall have to find other means to acquire what we need from him."

"You should have said so earlier, Albus, instead of going around in circles about his character. I will have the Trackers by his home no later than this afternoon." barked Moody.

"No Alastor, Horace will not be shadowed. The man embraces his paranoia better than you do, my friend. He will flee again if he even senses a cat trailing him." said Dumbledore, his pacing producing a trail in the rug. "No, Horace is better left alone. He will come to his

sense sooner or late and he will realize that he will profit greatly by aiding me. But if not, the option of introducing him to Harry is still wide open."

"If we ever find the boy! I told you the youngest Weasley boy would not be able to help us!" cried Moody.

Dumbledore stopped in his tracks to look out into the setting sun. "Have faith my old friend, Harry will return, you will see. He's merely rebelling against us, like all teenagers do against their parents. I'm all he has left, Alastor, where else will he go?" His voice was calm as he said all this, but his face, his face was nothing but calm. A deranged look crossed briefly on his ancient façade and he continued his earlier pacing about the room.

"Then what is it that you want me to do, Albus?" growled Moody, following his friend's path intently.

"I need a favour from you," At this, Dumbledore turned his head to the direction of the sitting ex-Auror before heading towards a bookcase deep behind the alcove at the back of his office.

"Well of course you need a favour, Albus, why else would I be here?" cried Moody sarcastically.

Dumbledore pointedly ignored the statement and spoke, his face hidden in the alcove. "Indeed the problem that Horace has given us can be resolve in time, but it does set us back in our plans here at Hogwarts. Luckily weeks before I left to pursue Horace, I created for us a backup plan that can be executed almost immediately. But before that, I need you to send one of the Trackers to the Ministry to make sure neither Scrimgeour nor Fudge, especially not Fudge, sinks their meddling hands and inquire about our man. I need you to keep them pacified by any means necessary."

"And who exactly is this man we are protecting? Why does he need to remain anonymous in the Ministry?" queried Moody, leaning forward in his chair to get a better look at Dumbledore, who now had his back turned to him.

"I believe you know him," was all Dumbledore said before he became engaged in something that was hidden in the alcove.

"What have you got there, Albus?" asked Moody, finally deciding to depart from his seat.

Suddenly, something like a rusted old bolt being pulled out of its place resounded throughout the room. Moody stopped in his tracks and listened for it again, his Auror sense telling him to be vigilant. He maybe in a warded room, but from years of working in the field, he'd come to experience that the worst things occur within warded rooms. The noise sounded for a second time and this time he was certain it had come from the alcove where Albus was still busy tinkering with.

"What is in there, Albus?" barked Moody.

"Nothing that will bite you, Alastor. Do settle down, this won't take much long. Aha! I knew it was the third book." cried Dumbledore, holding what seemed to be an ordinary textbook. Then, unexpectedly, for Moody that is, the alcove wall vanished and a large room was made visible.

Dumbledore then walked away from the dark alcove and went to stand before his friend, "Alastor, I would like you to meet Professor Robert Moore, our new Defence Against the Dark Arts Professor."

A figure appeared from the darkness and slowly stepped up into the light and airy main room of Dumbledore's office. The man was tall and well built. He had neat brown hair and a light, friendly face that spoke of kindness, yet there was something else about the man that seem to contradict everything that he was physically portraying. Moody stared at the man before him, trying to search through his vast memory whether he knew any person with the name of Moore.

"I believe I don't know anyone by the name of Robert Moore. His face does not strike me as familiar." said Moody, turning to look at his old friend and he found that the man was eyeing him as if he was bursting to tell him a wonderful secret.

"My, my Moody," said a deep voice. "How soon you forget your favourite apprentice. I'm hurt."

Moody's eyes darted back towards the strange new man. He was leaning against one of the book case and had a hand placed dramatically over his heart, his face a mocked pained. And then he

saw it, plain blue eyes temporarily gave way to brighter, mirthful warm coloured eyes.

"Impossible!" he shouted in alarm, looking back and forth Dumbledore and the new man.

Dumbledore's smile widened and his twinkling blue eyes would have blinded anyone who dared to look straight at them. "Oh Alastor, you should know by now that nothing is ever impossible with me."

Moody slumped back into his chair, his aged heart beating entirely too fast for his body. He looked back at the man and this time he saw the resemblance, it was subtle, but if one knew where to look... the stupid grin on his face...

"Fudge cannot know of this," he mumbled aloud.

"Yes my friend," uttered Dumbledore, returning to his seat behind the desk, his chin propped up triumphantly on his interlocked fingers. "The ministry cannot know."

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The Hogwarts Express finally went into a screeching halt just outside Hogsmeade Station, jerking its passengers forwards then backwards in their seat. The students then milled about outside the narrow walkway, all preparing to descend upon the misty night and aboard the horseless carriages that would take them up to the castle. Haeden took one look at the boisterous crowd of students piling outside their door and immediately his nose flared, causing him to fall back darkly into his seat.

"You okay, mate?" asked Ron in concern.

Taking slow and controlled breaths through his nose, Haeden spoke. "Can we wait out here for awhile?"

"What's wrong?" Hermione went and sat down next to him, unknowingly fuelling his senses more with her proximity.

"I just that like the crowd." he replied carefully, slowly scooting away from Hermione.



"But how about the carriages?" said Ron, making his way out of the compartment. "We might run out of –"

"Of course we can wait out here for awhile if you don't feel comfortable with the crowd, right Ron?" Hermione glared at Ron which immediately shut the boy up and brought him back in his seat.

"Yeah, we'll wait out. Plenty of carriages out there." said Ron, nodding.

"Thanks guys," mumbled Haeden, faking an appreciative smile.

As soon as the crowd had dispersed into a much more tolerable mass, Haeden, trailed by Ron and Hermione exited the train. There were only a few students left on the station by the time they got off and by the looks of the sky above and the silence of the station; they were cutting it very close into the Sorting Ceremony, something which, for the first time, Haeden was glad to be missing.

As they were making their way to the very last carriage in the station, an unusually large Thestral looked his way, its milky white eyes fixed on him. He had to admit that his first experience with winged beast wasn't all that great, but with all that he'd gone through this summer, looking into the lifeless eyes of the mysterious creature now evoked a deeper understanding within him. Any of the lingering amounts of repulsion he might have felt towards them about what they represented were now none existent and instead he now felt drawn towards them, both of them creations of the dark, resented and misunderstood.

Any conversations the two Gryffindors may have wanted to strike as they made their journey to the castle were deterred by his distant and positively severe expression, and to his utter dismay, they arrived just as the Sorting was about to start.

"Harry, my boy!" cried Fred, leaning over Lee to get a good shake out of Haeden's hand. The young Vampyre fought hard to keep his instincts away as the other half of the Weasley twins came barrelling down next to him.

"My lonesome chap, you had us all positively gloom with worry when you ran away like that." piped in George right after his brother, putting his arm over Haeden's shoulder. Haeden instinctively

stiffened at the human contact to his flesh, attracting five pairs of worried eyes towards him.

'Way to go to get their attention, Haeden.' He berated himself internally.

"Are you okay, Harry?" wondered George, pulling his body towards their direction.

'Tough it out, Snape. Do not make them question your actions.' He told himself over and over again as George didn't seem to want to let him go.

"Yeah... yeah. Of course I'm fine." he voiced out, but none of the Gryffindors seem to buy his words. And by now their small group had attracted the attention of their other House members and even some members of the staff that were already seated in the High Table. The only consolation it seemed was that the Headmaster was drawn in a conversation with tiny Professor Flitwick and had not noticed the happenings in the Gryffindor table.

"Look guys, I'm still feeling a little edgy after everything. A good meal then a goodnight's rest should do me well. Don't worry." Haeden tried again to pacify the concern looks of his House.

"Well then, you heard the man!" cried George, dispersing the crowd of on lookers and then said in a quieter voice. "Met any strange characters during your naughty little trip away?"

Haeden, his face controlled, turn to look at the twins and said in his most casual voice, "No, nothing strange."

"It seems dear old mother worried herself for nothing. Forge and I knew you could handle yourself." remarked Fred, claspng him on the shoulder before leaving their part of the table with his twin.

"Be seeing you Potter." they cried in unison.

"Those two should learn how to practice discretion." mumbled Hermione, eyeing the twin's retreating back in displeasure. "Headmaster Dumbledore clearly said...."

Exactly what Dumbledore said to them, he did not find out, for it was at that exact moment that the double doors opened to admit the new students, led by the strict Deputy Headmistress.

Haeden could not help but notice that this year's batch of first years was unusually short and looked positively frightened. There was a boy with curly brown hair that caught his particular attention, he was by far the smallest in the lot but what Haeden hadn't come to expect was how terrified he looked compared to all of the other first years, if it was as if the boy was walking to his death; not the way one would usually view a Sorting.

"They're midgets!" cried Ron, voicing out his earlier thoughts. "We weren't that small."

"Ronald, what a thing to say. You're supposed to be a prefect." chastised the bright brunette at once.

"Does somewhere in handbook state that Prefects can't voice out their thoughts?" argued Ron, unwilling to leave the matter.

Hermione looked for awhile as if she had been cowed but quickly got her thoughts back up. "Does doing the right thing have to be written in a book for you to do it without question? And you are a Prefect; that should tell you more than enough what you ought and ought not to do."

"Well I'm sorry I'm not as well versed with the dictionary as someone else here." Ron retorted.

Hermione would have replied quite angrily had it not been for McGonagall's severe look, silencing at once all that were still noisily chatting. Haeden gave off a tiny smirk off the side of his mouth at the shameful look Ron and Hermione had on their faces after being stared into silence by their Head of House.

'Serves them right,' He thought triumphantly to himself. 'A day doesn't go by without them having to bad mouth each other.'

Haeden swiftly scanned the crowd of students being sorted but it was obvious that Selene's Sorting would be done after every one else had been sorted, as she was nowhere in the crowd milling before McGonagall. He barely paid any attention to the Sorting

Ceremony, preferring to put all of his concentration into taking in slow, careful breathes so as to not get winded again with the strong scent of human blood around him. The only time he did look up was when the little boy he'd seen earlier walked up towards the stool and placed the Hat on his head.

There was nothing particularly different about the boy as he sat there before his peers like everyone else, but as Haeden's gaze landed unexpectedly on the High Table, he found that Snape was also surveying the youth with great interest, and though it was not plain on his face, Haeden could tell the man was distressed. He looked back at the boy still sitting petrified on the stool, what was so special about him? He was so concern on trying to figure out the boy that he nearly failed to hear the Hat scream out 'Slytherin!'

He didn't know what made him do it, but something told him that the boy being in Slytherin was a saving grace, and he clapped as loudly as any of the other Slytherins in the Hall. One quick look up at Head Table proved his assertions, as Severus' face reverted back to its cool indifference, but Haeden's sharp eyes saw in the man's eyes what the others could not see, and for a moment he remembered the man he'd meet back in the Stone Manor.

"What are you doing, mate?" cried Ron, jerking him away from his gaze.

"Huh?" mumbled Haeden, distracted.

"You're cheering for a Slytherin!" snapped the red head as if it was the most horrible fault in the world.

Haeden's hand dropped on top of the table. "What's wrong with that?" he asked.

The youngest Weasley son stared at him as if he'd suddenly grown an extra head, "Are you right in the head, mate?" Ron placed a hand on his head.

"I'm perfectly fine, Ron!" he said in a huff, brushing aside the hand on his forehead.

"Then care to explain why you were clapping as loudly as those snakes over there?" Ron pointed sharply towards the other side of

the hall where the Slytherins were all still rejoicing at the addition to their number.

"I was just trying to show a little inter-House support, what's wrong with that?" said Haeden, trying not to raise his voice at the boy's absurdness.

"But they're Slytherins!" exclaimed Ron. "Gryffindors have sworn for years to fight against Slytherins!"

The young Vampyre was so close to snapping at his 'friends' idiocy but an equally annoying female voice in his head kept him from lashing out. "There is no such thing Ron! Hogwarts is not where the war is, it's out there!" He gestured for the fields beyond the windows. "Voldemort wants to create discord and we shouldn't make his job any easier. Tell him Hermione!"

Haeden turned towards turned towards their other friend hoping to find a more sensible response and support. He'd hoped wrong.

Hermione had been watching their banter closely and now surveyed her bespectacled friend critically. There was definitely something different about the boy, of that she could tell, but she just could not tell as to what exactly was different about the boy. She knew that the previous year had been extremely traumatic for all of them, most especially for Harry. To lose a love one like that, Hermione could not even imagine where to begin and how to feel. That kind of trauma could definitely elicit a change in someone so strongly affected by it but she just hadn't expected the change to be so great that it had completely changed her friend's perspective. She was not so certain she liked that kind of change.

"I think you're both right," she replied diplomatically, still keeping one eye on Harry.

"How can we both be right?" cried Ron in disbelief while Haeden merely raised his hand in resignation, he had no interest in listening to the Muggleborn's explanation.

There was about a handful of students left to be sorted and Haeden's restless mind couldn't help but wander around. His thoughts then unexpectedly landed on the Headmaster and he

chanced a look at the Head Table to find Dumbledore serenely surveying the students.

Albus Dumbledore was a happy old man, yes he was. Despite the few hitches in his plan, everything was looking up to be great, not even a sudden interrogation from his Potions Master could deter the good mood he was now feeling. It was silly to think that only this morning he was wondering how he could get things back on track, especially with the disappearance of a certain boy. But now, Harry Potter had returned to him, like he'd expected him to be, and before the end of the night he would make certain that the boy could never run away from him again. He would make sure of it.

He clapped enthusiastically as another student was sorted into Gryffindor. He was definitely a very happy man.

Haeden averted his eyes from the Head Table before the growl he was trying to suppress blew his cover. Under the table, his hands shook with the amount of control he was wielding. Trying to find a neutral footing amidst all the human distractions, his eyes landed on the young boy that had earlier caught his attention. Unlike the other first years who were all sitting in front of the table, the boy was sitting beside Malfoy, and by the look of things, they were chummy with each other and that in itself was unusual, for not even with his friends had he ever seen the Malfoy heir at ease as he was now with the boy. He frowned.

Surprisingly it was Hermione that grabbed his undivided attention. "Where's that friend of yours from the train? Doesn't see want to be sorted?" she asked distastefully when McGonagall began rolling up the parchment that contained the year's list of first year students. He was about to voice out his own concerns when Dumbledore stood up, instantly silencing the now restless crowd.

"My dear students, I know how much you long for the feast to begin but I must acquire your attention one last time. This year Hogwarts is pleased to welcome a special student amongst her ranks. She has come a long way to experience our way of learning and I want you to make her feel welcome for she has been taught at home all her life and has not had the chance to experience a magical institution like ours." Dumbledore's grandfatherly air had all the students listening and Haeden tapped his foot impatiently on the

stone floor as the double door to the Great Hall opened to reveal an indifferent Selene.

The female Vampyre took one quick look at the curious crowd and felt a thrill surge through her. It was partly thirst, but it was also something just as stimulating that had aroused her – anxiety! The whole Hall was brim filled with it; she could tell that they were all curious of her and of her sudden appearance. A rather wilful part of her hungered to turn their anxiety into fear, it was certainly just what these clueless excuse for wizards deserve. But her rational side won over and she walked the length of the hall, fully aware of the gaping stares she was receiving from the opposite sex.

'Have they never seen a beautiful girl before?' She thought in amusement as a pug faced Ravenclaw winked at her. Selene added a little more sway in her steps and continued on towards the awaiting professors. It was during these occasions that her heightened hearing became a nuisance but the amusement of being able to hear what the others were whispering about her compensated for the irritation her ears were feeling.

Who would have thought that a timid little Hufflepuff would be capable of wanting to have her covered in mayonnaise? Or for a Ravenclaw to put more than his books on her? Looking up at the Head Table, she found her father caught between wanting to grin and to scowl at her.

Down at the Gryffindor table were the trio sat, Haeden wanted nothing more than be ignorant to the whisperings that began the moment the double doors opened since not all the whisperings he was hearing were favourable towards his sister. In fact there was one Hufflepuff who's desires were so strong, he could actually smell it, much to his utter disgust. Soon Selene was within his immediate sight and he caught her looking longingly at an ogling Gryffindor 7th year. As she walked passed him, he tried to avoid her eyes as much as possible, knowing that none of them would be able to contain their mirth at the wizards' malicious thoughts. However, before she could make it to the stool where the Sorting Hat still resided, Haeden felt a subtle burst come forth from the older Vampyre and he got a feel of the amusement she was trying to contain. He ducked his head immediately under the table as laughter threatened to escape from his sealed lips.

Dumbledore, completely oblivious to the internal ruckus Selene was causing in the male student population, stood warmly and waited for the girl with pen arms. "Ms. Freighter, welcome to Hogwarts."

"Headmaster Dumbledore," she greeted in perfect amiability, before handing out a piece of parchment to the wizened man. "A missive, from my mother." She said at the Headmaster's raised eye brows.

Dumbledore took the letter and read it silently, frowning slight when he got to the bottom of the letter. Haeden ached to know what the letter was about. Selene had not told him anything about a letter.

"I believe that that can be arranged," said Dumbledore, folding the parchment neatly and stowing it into his robes.

"Then my mother and I would like to extend our gratitude to the Headmaster," said Selene, tilting her head slightly at the Headmaster.

"It is no problem at all, my dear. Now it is customary for new students to be sorted into their Houses, so Ms. Freighter, would you please put on the Hat." the aged wizard scooped the Hat from the stool and gestured for Selene to sit on it. Selene, with the air of complete confidence, sat on the rickety stool and waited for Dumbledore to place the battered old Hat on her head.

Haeden waited with baited breath. He desperately hoped that the Clandestine would be sorted into his house, that way it would be easier for them to communicate without causing any alarm within his friends. But then again, he never could tell what could happen when it came to the vivacious Vampyre, for all he knew she might not belong in any of the Houses. Personality wise, she was definitely confusing enough for it to be a possibility.

After what seemed like an eternity, the Hat shouted. 'Slytherin!'

A lukewarm applause was what greeted Selene as Dumbledore removed the Hat from her head and she headed towards the proud House. Haeden's face fell and his disappointment was further aggravated when he heard Ron say, "Too bad for you mate, Malfoy will surely corrupt her now. You'd better forget about her, you didn't even know her all that well."



All throughout the feast, Haeden tried his best to act normally, even going as far as refraining from voicing out anymore of his thoughts. He just knew that portraying his old self would be a challenge. Ron was easy enough to play with, but Hermione was too damn observant for her own good and he had to watch his every move when in her presence. Though fully opening his senses would allow him to get a better feel of their thoughts and emotions, doing so would also open the floodgate that prevented him from gorging himself with fresh human blood and so he therefore relied on good old gut feeling and keen observations.

Finally the end of the feast arrived and the Prefects began ushering the first years out of the Hall and towards their Houses. Haeden took this opportunity to get away from Ron and Hermione, both of who were calling out the first years, to seek out Selene. He pushed through the crowd, making sure that as little as no flesh contact ever happened, but failed to find the female Clandestine. He then heard a distant voice call out his name.

Haeden turned around, nearly bumping into a Ravenclaw first years and saw Luna standing a few feet from him, just by the grand staircase. He made his way towards her.

"Harry Potter," said Luna softly.

"Luna," he smiled in acknowledgement, looking at her from head to toe, "You've grown."

"I have come into my Rights," she offered as an explanation, smiling serenely at the once more bespectacled boy. Haeden's brows furrowed in confusion but dismissed the statement as another one of the Ravenclaw's peculiar personality quirk.

"That's lovely," he replied uncertainly.

Luna then switched to staring at him and he couldn't help but squirm under her gaze; it was as if she was seeing right through his Glamour. But that was impossible, right?

"You look healthier and happier, Harry Potter." she finally said after half a minute of intense scrutiny to his person.

"What do you mean, Luna?" he asked, unsure on how she could have come up with such notions, considering she had joined them in their ridiculous escapade in the Ministry last June.

"You breathe easy now," she continued in her own mystic voice. "Like a heavy burden has been lifted off your shoulder." Haeden's eyes widened as Luna's penetrating looks continued to pierce through him. Try as he might, he could not unglue his eyes from her stares, like an unseen force had frozen him right on the spot where Luna's eyes were levelled.

"Welcome back..." she said out loud, her voice faraway. But it was what he heard uttered in his head that turned his blood cold. '...Haeden Ares Snape.'

Haeden staggered backwards, feeling the walls crumbling down on him. It was only after awhile did he manage to get a feel of himself again but all he could do was stare fearfully at the Ravenclaw. Luna's countenance was frightfully calm, stirring in more fear and question inside him, but on the outside he was forcing his face to remain impassive, not allowing any hint to show on his face that he had heard her voice in his head. But the feat proved to be impossible considering the knowing gaze the witch had him locked in.

At closer inspection, he realized that it wasn't only in height that Luna had changed. Being a young Vampyre, his senses were still highly acute to anything unusual, and there was certainly something different about the Ravenclaw's general presence. He couldn't describe it but somehow, over the summer, Luna had developed an even more mysterious aura; and he didn't like it one bit.

But as quickly as the fear in Haeden made him perceive the changes in Luna he would have otherwise not been able to detect, the Ravenclaw was once again beck to her jovial, airy, whimsical self, the Luna he had known the year before.

"Nice seeing you again, Harry Potter." cried Luna in a sing song voice before moving up the stairs, a joyful gait in her steps. Haeden stared after her, not knowing how to make do with what had just occurred. He was certain that he had not imagined the voice in his head, but then how did Luna know his name? He was so caught up

in his uneasy musings that he failed to notice a dark shadow hovering over him.

"Potter!" barked a familiar voice. Haeden braced himself for whatever the Potions Master was going to tell him and he turned around with shred of dread in his eyes.

Severus' countenance softened slightly at the fear in his son's eyes and pulled the boy in a more secluded part of the hall, away from few remaining students rushing to get to their dorm. "Harry," he began. "The Headmaster wishes to see you at once."

"Okay," replied Haeden, unable to hide the slight quiver in his voice. He was about to move out of the alcove they were in when Snape grabbed his hand and pulled him around.

"Listen to me, Haeden," Severus spoke so soft and quickly that Haeden barely registered the fact that his lips did not move at all. "I will not let anything happen to you whilst you are up. Just stick to the act and we'll be fine. I will never let him harm you again. Do you understand?"

Haeden stared at the man's deep penetrating eyes and felt a lump stuck up in his throat. He tried to push pass the lump but nothing he did seem to work. He therefore contented himself with a stiff nod of the head. But then he was also sure that even without the sudden lump in his throat, words would have eluded him as well.

"Good," Severus Snape straightened up and purposely walked out of the dark alcove. Haeden soon followed the man and the two Clandestines made their way towards the first of the many challenges they would soon have to face.

A/N: By the way, i have this quote from Dumbledore, "It is important to fight and fight and keep on fighting, for only then can evil be kept at bay but never quite eradicated..."

I know it's from HBP, but i have scanned the book for God knows how many times but i can't seem to find it. Can anyone help be find the chapter and what seen it was said? I just can't get the quote out of my mind...

'til next post...

dan4eva

## Chapter 21 A Sordid Act

The walk up to Dumbledore's office was done in silence, both Vampyres caught up in their own thoughts and consternations to make casual conversation to make light of the situation. Severus had been watching his son silently from the corner of his eye and saw how the boy held himself in utmost resolve, if only his hands did not shake as they were now. As he saw all of this, a large part of him wanted nothing more than to pull his son away from all this madness, his son who had suffered enough under Dumbledore's firm control. And now that they had freed him at last, here they were again sending him back to the Alpha wolf. Once again he cursed Dumbledore for forcing their hands.

At long last the pair arrived outside the stone gargoyle that guarded the Headmaster's office.

"Liquorice Wands." uttered Severus disdainfully. The gargoyle moved aside to reveal the staircase that would lead them up. Severus gestured for Haeden to move on ahead but he was instead met with wary eyes. The boy was silently pleading to him not to take him up and he could do nothing about it. They were far too close to Dumbledore for him to say anything to his son so as to reassure him that he would not let anything happen. His growing hatred for the wizened wizard grew tenfold at what he had to say next to protect their cover. He knew Haeden knew of the character he had to portray whilst at Hogwarts, but it did not make it any easier for him to do. As a matter of fact, it made it all the much more difficult.

"Don't be such a baby, Potter! Get up there now before I have to drag you up by your ears!" snapped Severus in full bastard mode. His words immediately got the boy's attention and a look of loathing flashed before him.

"What are you waiting for Potter, the welcome party from the press? Well I'm sorry to burst your bubble, you are a mere student here and you do not keep the Headmaster waiting, what ever your status may be in the public."

"Snuff it, Snape!" cried Haeden in incense, pushing pass Severus to get to the spiralling staircase.

The dizzying ride did not last long and soon they were standing outside the door that led to the Headmaster's office. Severus went for the griffin knocker and banged it three times before the Headmaster's gentile voice echoed throughout the antechamber.

"Ah, Severus my boy, do come in." rang Dumbledore's voice.

But instead of doing what the voice had said, Severus walked back to where his son was silently standing, clearly trying to clear his mind from any unwanted thoughts. Severus, after much internal deliberation, placed a tentative hand on Haeden's shoulder. When, to his relief, his hand wasn't shoved away like before, he gave his son a comforting squeeze. The moment however was cut short when at that instant the door to the office opened. Severus' hand immediately flew from Haeden's shoulder and he walked stoically towards the brightly lit circular office.

"Albus," Severus greeted with a noncommittal jerk of his head.

"Severus," replied the old man in turn. "Where is Harry?" Both men turned to look at the door and found said boy standing timidly by the door.

"Harry, my boy," exclaimed Dumbledore fondly, walking towards Haeden. "Come in child, you are no stranger to these walls after all."

Haeden allowed himself to be dragged into the room, all the while desperately trying to maintain a hold over his bodily reactions. The deep subconscious part of him kept relaying image after image of a dark cell that held nothing but pure darkness. He wanted to run, his Vampyric senses were screaming at him to turn away from the one that had imprisoned it for years. But he couldn't run, an unnamed force had planted him right where he was; he was stuck.

"Child, Harry, is anything the matter?" It was Dumbledore's voice that ultimately brought him back to the present and he willed for all of his control to come to him so as not to lash out at his former mentor.

"I... I..." he stuttered, grasping for the right words to say without revealing anything. "I'm sorry, sir." He tried to look positively contrite.

"What ever for, child?" asked Dumbledore, his twinkling blue eyes staring at him.

"For running off," mumbled Haeden softly, his head appropriately bowed down.

"You should be!" exclaimed Severus

"Severus," intoned Dumbledore, sending a warning look towards his faculty, "I'm sure Mr. Potter has a viable explanation for what he has done."

Severus forced out a sneer. "I'm sure he does."

"I do!" said Haeden stoutly, taking the Potion's Master aback. He then turned green eyes to face blue. "Sir, please forgive me. I just wanted to get away... away from it all."

His hands gestured wildly around to further emphasize his point.

At his ardent show of helplessness, Dumbledore placed what was supposed to be a comforting hand on his shoulder and he fought hard not to flinch.

"Harry, no need to explain yourself, I understand perfectly what you did. You were affected greatly by the death a great man, unlike some of us here." Dumbledore turned to eye his Potions Master briefly. "However, that does not mean I condone your actions. It was very foolish of you child, to run away like that."

"I know sir and I'm really sorry for all the trouble I've caused." said Haeden. "I wasn't thinking straight." At this Dumbledore gestured for him to take a seat.

"Have a seat, child, and tell us where you have been all this time."

Haeden gingerly took the offered seat and watched as his professor came to stand just a way off behind him, his expression unreadable. Before him the Headmaster sat behind his desk and he was looking expectantly at him through his half moon glass. He tried not to look directly at the twinkling blue eyes as he told his cover story.

"Well after the incident last June, I wanted to get away from anything that would remind me of him, it just go too much you see, so I took the Muggle bus and went to London. I'd saved money over the years and so I used that to get a room in the city. I basically went from one place to another; it wasn't that hard to convince the Muggles that I was old enough to be on my own. I just didn't want to be found before I was ready to face everyone again." The story was something they'd worked on for days and in the end they'd decided that staying in the Muggle part of London was more logical if he was indeed trying to get away from the death of his godfather. Plus Muggle London was considerably bigger than wizarding London and Haeden could easily claim he was staying in an inn in the heart of the city. The whole story was plausible, not too grand and overly complicated, and now all that remained was for the old man to believe it.

"Do you mean to tell us that you have been gallivanting around Muggle London all the while we were risking our necks looking for you?" voiced Severus, his arms crossed before his black robes.

"I was not gallivanting around Muggle London, as you put it, Professor." replied Haeden, barely keeping his temper in-check. He knew Snape had to maintain his cover, but could the man tone down the nastiness just a bit? Image be damned, he glared subtly at the older Vampyre. The man was not helping his control!

"Yes that is quite enough Severus," said Dumbledore in slight chastisement. "But Harry, are you certain you only stayed with the Muggles? You did not thread into the wizarding world, not even once?"

"No, sir." replied Haeden shaking his head. "I'm truly sorry, Professor."

Dumbledore waved a casual hand into the air and said, "Oh Harry, what is done is done. All that matters now is that you have returned to us safely. I'm sure the others will forgive you of the trouble you've caused, after all Sirius meant the world to you, and to have lost him in such a manner... I can scarcely imagine your grief. There is nothing more to apologize about, child."

"Thank you sir," smiled Haeden poignantly.



Then suddenly Dumbledore turned his attention towards Severus, a mysterious twinkle in his eyes that did not bode well at all. "Now Severus, I know I have kept you here long enough. I'm sure you're students must be wondering where you've gone and why you have not yet delivered the speech I know you tell your first years every year."

Severus shifted his weight from one leg to another, unease bubbling just by the surface. "I have informed Mr. Malfoy of my lateness, he will be orienting the first years on my behalf."

"Be that as it may, Severus, but you have a transfer student in your House this year. As capable as I find young Mr. Malfoy to be, I'm sure Ms. Freighter would be put much more at ease at your attendance to her." said Dumbledore.

"I'm fairly certain Draco can handle Ms. Freighter. Furthermore Albus, it is nearly curfew and loathe as I may to be in the company of a Gryffindor, Mr. Potter is still a student of this castle and thus his safety still falls under his teachers. And that last time I check I am still under your employment as an educator." drawled Severus, looking at the boy carefully. He could see the anxiety of being left alone buried under his mask of contrition.

"How gracious of you Severus, but you need not worry of Harry's safety; I have just the professor to take him back if he be kept here after curfew." replied Dumbledore, a edge on his voice that told them his decision was final.

Severus feared that if he pressed the issue of remaining in the office further the Headmaster would get suspicious and since he had no more excuse to deem his presence wanted, he begrudgingly consented defeat. He would have to find another way to keep an eye on his son.

"Very well Albus, I shall take my leave." Severus tilted his head to the Headmaster and in the process he nearly failed to see the surprise that flashed briefly on his son's face.

Almost as soon as the door shut behind the older Vampyre, Haeden felt the full attention of Dumbledore's gaze land on him and he couldn't help but recoil slightly in his seat at the sudden absence of twinkle in the Headmaster's eyes.

"Professor Dumbledore, is there anything else you wish to tell me?" Haeden asked uncertainly, not liking the gravity of the old man's eyes on him.

With his chin resting atop his interlocked fingers, Dumbledore was the visage of doting grandfather surveying his grandson. But Haeden knew better. "Now that Severus is out of the way," began the Headmaster. "I want you to tell me the truth Harry."

"I don't know what you mean, Professor Dumbledore." replied Haeden warily, leaning further into his seat.

Dumbledore leaned closer to his desk so that they were now a few inches from each other. "I know how intimidating Professor Snape can be, especially towards you, and now that he is gone, you may tell me what you do not want him to hear. I am always here for you Harry; you can tell me anything without ever fearing the repercussions." If Haeden had still been Harry, he was sure he would have instantly been drawn in by the older wizard's convincing words. But as it was, he now held more Magyck than a wizard like the Headmaster could ever dream of and he could just as easily drain the old man of his life with one swift strike and no one would be the wiser of who had done the heinous act. Yet despite his Magyck, hate he was to admit it, a part of him still feared the dark cell he could return to the moment the Headmaster realizes he was more than the shell he had created fifteen years ago.

And so he did nothing, for he could do nothing until his fear of his past lingers within him.

"I really don't know what you mean, sir." said Haeden timidly. "I told you I hid in Muggle London. Sir, if you are still mad at me for running away..."

"Harry, Harry..." said Dumbledore, leaning back into the comforts of his high backed chair, his fingers still interlocked before his chest. "I am not mad. I can never get mad at you child."

"Then sir, what is it that you want from me?" Haeden wondered, his voice shaking for the first time.

"However I must confess myself disappointed at you, child." continued Dumbledore as if the youth before him had not spoken. "You have learnt to lie to me."

"Lie?" exclaim Haeden, refraining from bolting out of his chair. "I have never lied to you Professor."

"You have not lied to me of your forays for the last month?" questioned Dumbledore, a definite edge now on his voice.

"I have hidden from the Order under my better judgement, but that is all." cried Haeden, wishing for the first time that the dour Potions Master could be in the room with him. He was feeling extremely unravelled.

"But I find it exceptionally difficult to think that you could evade my men by simply lurking with the Muggles. Something is missing that you are not telling me, Harry, and I am very very disappointed." intoned the Headmaster in a voice Haeden had never heard before.

"I'm not hiding anything, sir. I was really just with the Muggles." said Haeden desperately. He had to get out of here, he didn't know for how long he could subdue his instincts anymore.

"But you do not associate well with Muggles, Harry. You're relatives weren't much of a role model, now were they?" said Dumbledore.

"No sir, they weren't." agreed Haeden. "I'm truly sorry for disregarding my safety and everything but I do not regret what I did, sir."

Dumbledore closed his eyes for a moment and Haeden chance a look around, looking for the quickest route to get away from the office when the opportunity presented itself. "I'm sure you don't." said the Headmaster after awhile. "But I still cannot get from my mind that you are somehow hiding something from me, Harry."

Haeden stood and took a cautious step forward and laid his hands on top of the Headmaster's desk. He made sure that Dumbledore's eyes were on him before he spoke in the most sincere voice he could muster. "I swear to you sir, I am not hiding anything from you. I'm sorry for ever causing you such distress."

A gentle smile etched itself on the Headmaster's ancient visage and Haeden couldn't help but feel a slight tinge of relief surge through him. His relief however was shattered when a dangerous glint passed through the twinkling blue eyes. "We shall have to see then."

Haeden felt the force hit him but he never anticipated being thrown across the room and landing heaving on a spindly table that held all sorts of metallic trinkets. A figure was walking towards him but his vision was so blurred up he could not make out who it was. Then all of a sudden his head pounded with such intense pain he thought he would die. But after awhile he realized that the pain was centralized in his frontal lobe and something in him kicked in, telling him to remain conscious until the pain dissipated.

It was the last thing he knew before everything else went blank.

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His head hurt, that was the first thing that registered in his befuddled mind. He ran a hand over his head and hissed in pain as he felt a reasonable lump just over the side of his head. He then opened one bleary eye and found that he was still in the headmaster's office.

'Odd,' he thought, getting slowly to his feet.

"Harry," said a voice from behind him causing him to jerk around in surprise.

"Headmaster!" he gasped out at seeing who had called his name. "What am I still doing here?"

"My boy, you've had an exhausting day and you fell asleep right there on my couch." Dumbledore pointed at the lounge he had just vacated.

"I fell asleep?" repeated Haeden, his brows knitting in confusion.

"Indeed you did, my boy. You were so peaceful; I had not the heart to disturb your slumber. But as it is very late I think you need to get back to your House." said Dumbledore, a maddening twinkle in his already maddening eyes.

"Yeah... yeah, I'd better go." said Haeden absentmindedly, trying to piece out the events of the evening. He could not recall ever falling asleep, especially not in the old man's presence.

"Ah Harry, you need an escort before you leave. We don't want Mr. Filch catching you all alone in the corridors at this time, do we now?" Dumbledore turned towards his fireplace and scooped up a handful of powder in his hands. Haeden nodded at the Headmaster's suggestion and he barely heard the name that was uttered in the flames. No sooner had the Headmaster tossed the Floo Powder in the grate, a well-built man with short brown hair stepped out of the flames.

"Harry, I want you to meet Professor Monroe, he's the new Defence Against the Dark Arts professor and he shall be escorting you back to your dorm." said Dumbledore, gesturing at the new comer.

"A pleasure to finally meet you Mr. Potter," said a deep voice that came from the new Professor.

"You too, Professor," replied Haden, with nothing else on his mind but to get out of the office as quickly as possible. Something was telling him that something had happened to him, he just could not pin point what it was.

"You two should get going now, you both have an early day tomorrow," Dumbledore ushered them out of his office and soon Haeden was left in the company of the unknown Professor.

They were about two corridors away from the Gryffindor common room when the brown haired Professor began conversing with him. "I have heard many great things about you, Mr. Potter."

"Who hasn't?" growled Haeden. The pain in his head was diminishing but now it was extremely evident in his mood that he needed to get some sleep.

"Some, I must say, I find very difficult to believe." said the man in an amicable manner.

"You must not read too much into things, Professor. Some of them are just fabricated to bring more colour into my already messed up

life." drawled Haeden, allowing his feet to drag him into the familiar corridor that led up to the portrait of the Fat Lady.

"Like perhaps the one where you fought Death Eaters in the Ministry?" Haeden stopped in his tracks at once and turned his attention for the first time on the young professor.

"That one they think is fabricated. But it's not. I was there, I fought them." Haeden's voice had taken a steady tone as he said all that.

"I don't know what to make of you anymore, Mr. Potter." said the professor once they'd started walking again.

"I don't really care what others think of me, Professor. All I know is that I'm telling the truth." said Haeden flatly. "We'll here's my stop. Thank you for the company Professor."

"My pleasure Mr. Potter." said Monroe. "I'll be seeing you in class."

Haeden watched the tall man as he rounded the corner before entering the Common Room, Ron having told him of the password during the Feast. The common room was eerily silent by the time he stepped through the portrait hole and dying embers now replaced the roaring fires of the Gryffindor common room. He'd barely taken a step into the room when a figure suddenly stood before him and he staggered back in surprise.

"Haeden," the figure whispered harshly.

"Selene?" cried Haeden, squinting through the dark. The girl had a frazzled look upon her and she wore a robe over her night dress "What are you doing here?"

"Father left ahead of you and when after an hour you were still up there with the old man, we started getting worried. Are you alright?" Selene grabbed him by the elbows and helped him land comfortable in one of the couches by the fireplace.

"How'd you get in?" he asked.

"A friend." replied Selene vaguely. "Are you okay?"

"I'm tired and my head still hurts," said Haeden, reclining his head on the headrest of the couch. He felt Selene slump down beside him.

"Do you recall who I am and who you are?" asked Selene, her hands gripping his worriedly.

"You're Selene, my annoying, bossy sister. And I'm Haeden, a Sedaire, as you say." he recited with his eyes close and his head leaning backwards.

Selene gave out an audible sigh of relief and said, "That's good, at least you still remember."

Haeden sat upright at her words and exclaimed softly, "How is that good?"

"I don't know." admitted the female Vampyre, rising from her seat to walk up towards the fireplace. "But you said your head hurts."

"Yeah," mumbled Haeden, staring after his sister. "He said I fell asleep in his office. I highly doubt that's what really happened. I can only remember up until the time he sent Snape away."

"I'm calling for father." said Selene at once, and for once Haeden had nothing to say about it. As she was about to pull out the rune engraved ring that hung in a chain around her neck, robes rustled in the darkness, acquiring the attention of the two Vampyres.

"Who's there?" demanded Haeden, rising from his seat, his wand drawn. And at the same time Selene placed a hand on his raised arm and said, "Calm down Haeden, she's with us. Seaea valythu deree, Airu."

Haeden's eyes turned towards the older Vampyre as she started speaking in Ancient Rumnic, the language of the Clandestines. His Rumnic was basic at best, not having enough time during the summer to actually learn the language, and all that he understood from the girl was come and show; not at all helpful in aiding him to understand the conversation.

"Tay. Quea gueri fue saeri huriea." said the mysterious other person in the room, her voice indistinguishable in the Rumnic's smooth and airy tones.

Her hand still on the younger Vampyre, Selene nodded in acceptance at the third Clandestine in the room and spoke, this time in English. "Very well, it is your choice. But what is it that you've got to tell us."

"My Lord is on his way," said the hidden figure. Haeden tried to see where the person was hiding but it seems that like Selene, the person knew how to conceal herself, much to his annoyance.

"He knows then," said Selene, releasing her hold on Haeden and returning to her seat. "Sit down Haeden, father's on his way."

As Haeden allowed himself to be pulled down to sit beside the female Vampyre, his mind still wandered at the dark recesses of the room, searching in futility for the mysterious Clandestine. When finally he could find neither head nor hind of the person, he turned to Selene, filled to burst with questions. Selene however beat him to his question.

"Yes, she's a Clandestine." said Selene to Haeden's unspoken question.

"Who is she?" asked Haeden, his eyes wandering hopelessly around the room.

"That is for her to tell you. You will just have to wait for her to introduce herself to you," answered Selene, her eyes seeming to know where the person was located. Haeden followed her gaze.

"Is she a Gryffindor? How come I never knew there was one like you in the tower?" said Haeden in quick successions.

Selene looked straight at the curious green eyes and said, "Haeden, all you need to know for now is that we're not the only Clandestines in the castle. They've been stationed here for sometime now and their identities are better left unknown for their own safety and ours."

Haeden would have asked more question at that moment had the portrait hole not open to reveal the stoic form of their Potion's Master.

"Father!" cried Selene, walking up to stand beside the older man. "Do you know...?"



"Yes, I know what happened," said Severus promptly, pacifying his daughter at once.

"You do?" exclaimed Haeden, bolting out of his seat. "How? He sent you out."

"Calm down, Haeden. There is no use waking up the whole House." said Severus, walking up towards his agitated son. "Tell me exactly all that you remember."

"I can't it hurts. All that I recall is up from the time he forced you to leave." said Haeden, placing a hand over the tender spot on his head.

"No sense at all of what happened? No fuzzy images or ..." questioned the older man further, annoying the tired Vampyre.

"I don't recall anything, alright!" Haeden all but hissed at the man. "Will you just tell me what the hell went on up there, because I honestly have no clue?"

"Haeden," admonished his father for the first time, clearly shocking the boy in place. "That is enough. I have tolerated your anger long enough but I will not be addressed in such a manner, especially not from my own son."

Haeden's nose flared in irritation but kept his silence. Severus spoke again once he was certain his son would not interrupt him again. "I was there, though not in the manner you are thinking. The moment Dumbledore quite craftily sent me out, I knew he was up to something and so I stayed long enough outside the door to penetrate your mind."

"You went in my head?" said Haeden incredulously.

"I apologize for that, but that is the only way I could view what was happening and still have little control of the situation. And since we are connected by more than blood, the intrusion was easy enough that you were left unaware of it." explained Severus.

Haeden did not know whether to get mad at the professor for invading his mind or to be glad that the mad had not left him alone

with the manipulative old wizard. But at least now he knew that the man standing before him would not leave him for death, regardless of the contradicting image he still held of the man from his past.

"He did not believe our tale..." continued Severus. "And so he questioned you relentlessly over and over to tell him the truth. At one point I'd thought that you'd managed to convince him, for I must applaud your convincing act, but I was mistaken. He had a plan under his sleeve all along to test whether your trip away had made you waver in your loyalty."

"Why is it that I don't recall any of this?" mumbled Haeden, running a hand once more over the sore spot on his head. It took awhile before Severus responded to the inquiry and at that time asked for them to take a seat. Fear mounted within Haeden.

"Why don't I recall any of this?" repeated Haeden in distress.

Severus knew better than try to offer the boy comfort when he was in such a state, but still, as a parent, it hurt not to be able to comfort your own son. "Haeden, believe me when I say that had I known he would do what he did, I would have protested greatly of leaving you alone with him."

"What did he do to me?" cried Haeden, no longer able unable to keep his voice down.

"Father, what happened?" asked Selene, she did not like seeing the look of hesitation in her father's eyes.

"Son, he attacked you before roughly forcing himself into your mental barriers," At this Severus' face turned a disgusted shade as his mind relived through all that he had seen. "He ravaged through your mind like an animal and with such vigour that had I not thought to enter your mind earlier, he would have gained access to your real memories."

As he stood outside the door that separated him from his son, he knew that Dumbledore was up to something and he would not leave his son alone with the man, not after he had sworn to do all he could to protect him. Severus quickly went through his options in his head and decided that the best way to remain with his son without the old man finding out was to somehow connect with the boy's mind. He

was a Master Occlumence as well as a Master Legilimens, he could easily pull the feat off, and the fact that Haeden was his own flesh and blood made it all the more easy to form a connection.

If he was to do this he had to find a secluded classroom and so he dashed as fast as he could to the nearest empty classroom he could find. Once inside the dark room Severus immediately went inward into his mind and searched for the connection that linked him to his son. It didn't take long and at last he was looking at Dumbledore's through his son's unclouded eyes.

Dumbledore was sitting omnisciently behind his desk, his hands propped up before him. "But I still cannot get from my mind that you are somehow hiding something from me, Harry."

Severus growled angrily at the old wizard, knowing that while he was inside his son's head no one could hear him. The next thing he knew however was that he was approaching the damned wizard – no, his son was the one approaching the Headmaster. The older Vampyre cried out to his son, telling him not to get close, but all of his words went to nought. The boy could not hear him.

"I swear to you sir, I am not hiding anything from you. I'm sorry for ever causing you such distress." said Haeden. That was when Severus saw the glint in the Headmaster's eyes and he knew that if he did not act soon his son would be imprisoned in his own head again. They were both flung across the room by a force so strong Severus knew it was once again stolen by Dumbledore from an unsuspecting Clandestine. Severus tried to get the both of them rising but Haeden's body had taken the brunt of the impact whilst his body was safely hidden away in a dark classroom.

Dumbledore slowly made his way towards his son's body and once he had bent down to the boy's level, the old man brandished his wand and pointed it straight to Haeden's head, all the while a maniac glint in his twinkling blue eyes. Severus could do nothing as all the wind was knocked out of him and he felt as if his head was about to explode, though he knew this was only a fraction of the pain his son was currently feeling. Severus grabbed at all the threads connecting him to his son and forced all of his will through the threads; his son needed to stay conscious.

He witnessed as ribbon after ribbon of memories were shredded by Dumbledore. The act was so savagely done that Severus knew in an instant that Dumbledore cared not if he rendered the child a mangled waste after this. Severus fought with every ounce of his strength to remain inside Haeden's mind, he had to make sure that Dumbledore did not tear down anymore than the fake memories they'd created. But even with Severus' help, Dumbledore's forceful entry had weakened both Haeden's body and mind and there was only so much Severus could do without being in the same room as his son.

And then when Severus thought that Dumbledore would continue his mental ravage of Haeden's mind, the pressure in his head ceased and Dumbledore's form started to disappear from the myriad of destroyed memories. Severus rose to his feet, he had to heal all of the damages Dumbledore had inflicted on his son's mind if he wanted the boy to remain sane after all of this. There were glistening strands of shredded ribbons of memory everywhere and as he was about to mend the strands that were littering dangerously close to his son's real mental shields, he felt his son struggling to remain conscious.

"Headmaster, please..." slurred the boy.

"Forgive me, Harry, but I will not have your image of me tarnished by my moment of weakness and paranoia. I must do this for the greater good of the wizarding world." Dumbledore raised his wand at Haeden for a second time and all that Severus remembered before being forcefully cast out of his son's mind was the flash of a brilliant white light.

"Obliviate specifico!"

Haeden's features paled at the thought of his mind being harassed like that. Even though he had no recollection of the event, he could visualize it enough that it made him sick to the stomach. Pulling his legs closer to his chest into a protective embrace, he spoke in a small voice. "What is that supposed to mean? You make it sound like metal rape or something..."

Someone in the darkness gasped but no one fought to disagree with him.

When Selene could no longer take the heavy silence that had enveloped them, she turned to her father. "And then what happened?"

Severus had been utterly repulsed at the level Dumbledore could descend upon so as to maintain the control he needed over his people. Was this how it had always been? The knowledge of playing blind to his son's plight added more to his sins towards the child. It was only at Selene's voice did he emerge from his self-loathing. He looked to his right and saw his son looking younger than he really was. The boy was frightened and Severus berated himself some more for not having seen this before. All those times in the past that Potter was alone with the Headmaster, the old coot could have been doing the very same thing to reassure himself of the boy's loyalty. Not even the Dark Lord did that to his followers, and that sickened Severus even more.

"He wiped your memory." said Severus, barely containing his anger. "And he did a pretty damn good job at it too; I could barely see the traces of attack in your mind." Severus placed a tentative hand on his son's hand. "Haeden please talk to us. Had we known earlier that this was what he was doing to you when you are alone with him, we would have intervened at once, regardless of our cover."

Haeden tried to smile at the man to show him that he did not blame him, but all that came out was a pained look.

"I think I'd always known." he mumbled softly, staring at the dying embers.

"What do you mean?" questioned Selene. Severus sat all straighter as well at the proclamation.

"When I had... you know... my Release... I had this out-of-body experience with my former self. I was pulled into this dark plane and my former self was confronted by my current self. Do you get me?" He turned to look at his sister and ... professor.

"We do, child. Go on." Severus responded, prompting Haeden to speak.

"So basically I confronted my old self. It's rather confusing now come to think of it..." He knew he was starting to babble, but he just

somehow could not get his thoughts sorted out. "And then my current self showed my former self memories I had never seen before. In most of them I was alone with Dumbledore and he had a wand pointed at me. When I was finally let free, I didn't think deeper into those memories I'd shown myself because somehow I'd proven to myself that Dumbledore never really did nor care about me, I was just his pawn, and I didn't want to go thinking like that considering how messed up I was back then."

Haeden never noticed the long arms that now enveloped his shoulders. "So I guess I'd always known what he was doing that to me. I wouldn't have shown it to my former self if I hadn't known, right? And I still allowed him to do it..."

"Shush Haeden; you are not to blame for that man's madness. Perhaps your subconscious knew but you were none the wiser of it, none of us were. But I swear to you I won't let it happen again. We'll come up with something else to keep Dumbledore oblivious, but you will not be subjected to that man's – attacks – again. I swear child, I swear." said Severus vehemently, pleased that the boy had yet to remove his hold on him. He needed to comfort his son like this.

Silence reigned over the three of them again, each lost in their own thoughts on how to best put an end to the Headmaster's vice-like infatuation with Clandestines. Soon however Haeden became aware of his surroundings once more and he stared at the hand that had wrapped itself around him, suddenly feeling something warm flaming inside him.

"I'm tired, I'm going to bed." he said, slowly unfurling himself.

"Yeah, we should go and rest. It's almost three." said Selene, rising as well from her position on his other side. "Will you be alright?"

"I'll be fine," Haeden tried to smile at them.

"We'll have to talk more of this tomorrow, Haeden." said Severus, eyeing his son critically.

"Whatever," replied Haeden flatly, now making his way up towards the boy's dormitories. "G'night."

Severus and Selene watched him until the door to the boy's dormitory closed behind him and then Severus made to get back to his quarters as well. "You should head back down as well, child."

"In awhile, sir." said Selene, wrapping her robes closer to her person so as to ward off the cold.

"Very well," Severus walked up towards her daughter and she instinctively leaned in to the kiss he'd placed on her forehead. "Goodnight, and be safe young one."

"Goodnight, father,"

The moment she was all alone in the dark Gryffindor common room, she turned once more towards the corner that she knew still concealed her friend. And as she'd expected, the Clandestine walked out from behind a hidden nook by the bookshelves.

"Will you watch over him for me whilst he is here in the tower?" asked the female Vampyre of the other Clandestine.

"Of course, Selene." replied the other girl in earnest. "You should really follow the professor back to the dungeons; the wards will not hide your presence here forever."

"You're right, goodnight my friend." said Selene with a small inclination of her head.

"Goodnight to you too." said the girl, returning the gesture.

Selene headed for the portrait hole while the mysterious Clandestine walked back up to the girl's dormitory. Tomorrow they would deal with this new revelation, but for now, a good night's sleep was what they all needed.

A/N: There you go, now we all know what Dumbledore had been doing to poor old Harry to make sure he is always under his influence. Don't you just want to strangle the man? Well anyway, I've used a few "foreign" words in this fic. Basically I made them up to bring in a more realistic feel that Severus and the others are different from the others and come from a different world.

To help you understand the story more, here are the translations of the Rumnic words i've created.

Seaea valythu deree, Airu – Come show yourself, Airu

Tay. Quea gueri fue saeri huriea – No. I need to stay hidden

Sedaire – a Dark Child/Cursed child. Descendents of Grindenwald that have been cursed by the council to fight in the war. Lily Evans and Lord Voldemort are a few of the know Sedaires.

gaidar – home

Taie – (can't say yet, kinda ruins the suspense)

Airu – (same thing here)

Though take note that the last two titles, are important to the story and you should take note their various appearances in the chapters... hint hint... wink wink...

'til next post.

read and review...

dan4eva



## Chapter 22 All I Ask

The Queen tugged at her hood as she raised her head and her eyes landed on the towering building that loomed just a few meters before her. Ensconced by the woods about, it was a singular structure made of solid black rock that rose to the Heavens above. There was only one way in and one way out, and it was through the large heavy iron gates that threatened all those who dared come hither. The place held none of the warmth and harmony the rest of their plane held, but instead an air of severity and authority exuded from every stone. She could hear what little wildlife there was in the woods roaming about under the white glow of the moonlight.

Caked mud hung to the hem of her dress as she strode decisively towards her destination. The austere structure was not a fixture in their plane, only every appearing at times of great need and this was such a time. Upon reaching the first of the front steps, she heard the iron doors grind at her approach, a distinct moan in the hinges as they opened. Once she'd climbed the short length of the steps, the heavy doors had ceased moving and an opening of barely a few inches could be made out in the dark. The ominous sound of the heavy doors closing on their own was soon heard as she proceeded deeper into the heart of the solid structure. Inside, the halls were lit by torches, causing the tall columns to create long shadows on the dark marble floor, her light steps resonating around the silent hall.

All too soon she reached another door, this time made of bronze and had runes engraved on its sides. A Clandestine dressed in a contrasting white fluid dress with a light beige coloured shawl draped over her shoulder stood by the door, awaiting her arrival. With a touch of the Clandestine's hand, the bronze door glowed and opened with ease. The Queen did not halt to greet the bowed Guardian but instead put more brisk into her steps. A dozen or so doors lined the walls of the next hall, all leading into various rooms of which purpose she never wanted to know.

After entering through yet another set of Guardian guarded doors, this time silver, she'd finally reached the end of the endless array of column filled halls and stood before a mist filled stone arch, the gateway that would ultimately lead her all the way up to the top of the building – her intended destination. It was like walking under a cold raging waterfall and she could feel her Magyck trying to protect her from the more aggressive nature of the gateway. Runes swirled

around her, both guiding and cautioning her of the place she would soon set foot on. It didn't take long for the confounding passage to end and at long last her bare feet touched cold marble, completely purified by the runes of anything that could harm.

'Old age and paranoia,' she thought in annoyance, straightening out her harassed dress, now entirely free of any dirt it had picked up on the way or anything of ill-intent for that matter. Light, as the lower floors were dark, the corridor that led to the Council Chamber was stark white, to the point that it was literally blinding to the eyes. But the Queen marched on, unhindered by the unnatural sheen of the white walls, and headed for the last remaining obstacle, a colossal gold door. The rune engraved gold door was as large as the heavy iron doors miles below her, and like the last two doors she had passed on the way, it too was guarded by a Guardian.

"Your High Courtship," curtsied the Guardian, "They have been expecting you." And with a light touch from her palm the golden doors opened to what seemed like a dark abyss, not even the corridor's sheer brightness penetrated the dark ahead.

Walking onwards, the Queen entered the Council Chamber.

The dark was all consuming and she would have been buried in the darkness the moment the gates sealed shut behind her had not four pillars of light descended from above, illuminating only a small area where a long table stretched to seat ten Council members. As far back as she could recall the Shadow Council had always been there to watch over the people, its ancient presence going beyond even that of their own history. They were composed of the wisest men and women of the Clandestine Plan, whose wisdom and power had prevented the annihilation of their kind ten times over in the course of their bloody history.

She walked towards the gold high backed chair that had appeared between where she'd previously stood and the watching Council members. From her position on the chair, she had to strain her head to look up at the Council who were all on an unseen elevated platform; weeks of waiting for them to respond and she felt like she was being tried. She finally lowered her hood and a trail of dark hair fell perfectly behind her, framing her face delicately.

"Your Excellency," uttered the Council member that sat at the very middle of the group, his voice echoing in the darkness. His face, like all of the Council members, was hidden in the shadows of the chamber but unlike all of the Council members who were wearing deep blue robes with white trimmings and delicate rune embroidery; his deep blue robes were trimmed with gold trimmings and gold rune embroidery. There was no doubt in his attire that he was the Head Councilman, leader of the Shadow Council.

"We have received your summons, High Queen Cassiopeia," boomed the voice of the Council member to the right of the Head Councilman. "And have read through your proposition. I would be lying to you if I told you that you have not caused a disturbance amongst the Council. Pray tell us what prompted such decadence in one so dedicated to our people such as yourself!"

Cassiopeia Snape, Queen of all Vampyres and High Queen of the Royal Court, stood from her seat, knowing full well that her presence, especially after her proposal, would not that be received without clamour. "Council members of the revered Council of Shadows," she began courteously. "For almost a century now our people have lived under singular the threat of one Albus Dumbledore, prying us of our Magyck, attacking those who fail to seek our sanctuary. We have all preyed witness to his near barbaric attacks and lost loved ones due to his insatiable thirst to get his hands on power beyond imagination. What I seek from the Council is of small consequence to put an end to all of this carnage."

"I find your view of what is considered of small consequence terrifying, Your Excellency," voiced out the Council member furthest from the middle. "For what you seek us to perform is impossible!"

"If my memory of historical accounts is to be relied on, I believe you have performed feats that many would find impossible, Councilman Thorn," refuted Queen Cassiopeia, reigning in her frustrations.

"True," replied the Councilman delicately "But those were done in absolute desperation and you have not given this Council enough proof that this plan of yours is the only solution to our problem. We have never condoned such acts before and we will not start now."

"Is the war not proof enough that we need to act?" rebutted the Queen.

"The Council was taken actions with regards to the war, Your Courtship, and I do recall your family siding with the decision." intoned the Councilman named Thorn.

"A decisive act, I agree that worked back then. However it no longer justifies our means, too many have been sacrificed by our harsh decision. We need to rectify things." said Queen Cassiopeia dispassionately.

"And allowing a Halfling access to powerful Magyck is your way of rectifying this – mistake – of ours?" A new voice spoke out from the cloaked group.

"Yes, Councilwoman Agatha." nodded the Queen and a whispered discussion amongst the other members of the Council then ensued.

"Explain yourself, High Queen Cassiopeia." cried the Head Councilman above the uproar. "How is allowing Lord Voldemort more leniency on Magyckal usage a solution to our problems?"

"This Council vowed a century ago that it would do all it can to help the people before relinquishing complete control back to the Courts, and now that one of our kind is seeking help, you do not even rise to the occasion?" the Queen accused heatedly.

"Watch your tongue, High Queen!" barked Councilman Thorn. "You stand before us without the Courts' backing; your words do not hold as much power as you think it does!"

"Head Councilman, you said it yourself the moment you imprisoned Gellert back in Cavernous Pass that his successor was the best candidate to lead our forces against Dumbledore. He has done an enormous job at keeping Dumbledore at bay, delaying the old man's attacks and raids on our people. He has managed to turn the older pureblood families to our cause, something that has not been done since their Exile. We could be in the brink of uniting some of them back into our world, creating a much more powerful force than Dumbledore could ever anticipate from us. You know this to be true, Damascus!" exclaimed the Queen, her eyes straight on the tall Clandestine in the middle of the assemblage.

A great uproar was inevitable at her direct address to the Head Councilman. The shouts of indignation filled the room with so much tension she could literally feel her hair being singed by the sheer amount of Magyck that descended upon her. It didn't take long however for the Council to revert itself to the cold indifference it was renowned to possess in quantities even her son could not acquire.

Once the hubbub of anger died down, the Head Councilman rose to his feet to survey the determined ruler and spoke in voice that betrayed not one ounce of emotion. "If and if the Council does grant the leniency Lord Voldemort demands, what guarantee will you give us that a mere Halfling such as him, no matter how much favour he may possess within the Council, will not abuse his Magyck when even Council members fear the violent nature of indulging oneself in wild Magyck? We maybe powerful compared to our exiled counterparts but that is at a price; we are not to willingly cause harm on another. What guarantee do you give the Council that Lord Voldemort will be above such temptations?"

Queen Cassiopeia recoiled inwardly. She knew they were going to ask this question sooner or later for she too kept repeating the question over and over in her head before finally deciding to approach the Council. She sighed. Even she was not convinced of the answer she would be giving and it was only her trust in the Dark Lord that ultimately decided her actions. She just hoped that whatever favour the dark man held over the Council would be enough.

"I have no guarantees," she said but added quickly before she was interrupted by another outburst. "But this war has raged on for far too long, and the chance to end it now reveals itself before us. Make true to the promises you've made the people. The suffering must end; surely you've felt the strain it has brought to our Magyck, I have Seen it through the wells."

Silence marked the end of her words. She could hear every single one of their near immortal hearts beating rhythmically beneath their chest but their Magyck concealed their words to her ears. As a Vampyre who prided herself with honed abilities above all else, the silence rang heavy to her ears. She was not used to impenetrable silence and hated how the Council was now using it against her. If she could get away with it with only a slap on the wrist, she would

have screamed just so as to alleviate the silence that now encompassed her.

But before the silence could unnerve her even more, the cloak of silence that had fallen over the Council dissipated and she could once again hear their whispered discussion. The distinct sound of a chair being pushed away brought her attention to the Head Councilman.

"Listen to me, Cassiopeia." began the ancient Clandestine, directly addressing the surprised Vampyre. "I now speak to you as an old friend. I have watched Slavarin ever since he was only but a Court king and rejoiced at seeing him rise to High King. We stood side by side in the war fought by Grindenwald and I knew then that he would be a great king to rule our people. But that was not to be, we lost that war and he was viciously slain years later by the same mad man we are all fighting to defeat because we made the mistake of assuming that a seventeen year old wizard would not be tempted to seek out our secret."

"The Vampyric reign of the Snapes ends in a couple of years. Do not tarnish your husband's legacy by making the same mistake as ours."

"In what way are our situations alike?" demanded Queen Cassiopeia, striding closer to the unapproachable assemblage.

"The Council has decided, Your Excellency." intoned the Head Councilman calmly. "Do not waste your efforts in this matter anymore for as I have heard, your grandson has finally been Released. Train the Sedaire as your family had vowed to do and leave this matter be!"

Cassiopeia would have indeed shouted then if the Head Councilman had not waved his hand in dismissal causing the pillars of light to suddenly vanish, signalling the departure of the Council, and throwing her once more in the pit of darkness. Behind her the gates opened to reveal a window of light, much like a light would at the end of a tunnel. She grabbed the train of her dress and marched angrily out of the chamber.

She hated old age and paranoia! Her frustrated voice rang throughout the depressing structure.

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Haeden had spent the entire night lying on his bed, going through the memories he had had with Dumbledore in the five short years he'd been in the castle. The images were sporadic at best, flashing in and out to the fore of his mind. By five in the morning a huge migraine had ingrained itself in his head and he was left to abandon his perusal of his memories to get at least a couple of hours of sleep before class. Therefore it was to no surprise the kind of reaction he got from his friends a mere two hours later.

"Harry, you look like death warmed over!" screeched Hermione's voice as he descended from the boy's dormitory. "Where were you last night? You kinda disappeared after the feast."

Haeden tried not to snarl at the girl as her voice pounded like drums on his sleep deprived head. "I was with Professor Dumbledore."

"Did you two party all night?" asked Ron in amusement.

"Bad dreams," stated Haeden as an explanation, which definitely was not far from the truth, and better yet it had shut them up. He knew the events of the last year were a sensitive issue for them and that a subtle reminder of what he'd suffer was the best possible way to keep them quiet.

"Have you told the Headmaster of your dreams?" Maybe not!

"Hermione," began Haeden. "Can we please not talk about this right now? It's too early." Hermione looked like she wanted nothing more than to discuss the matter further but at his stern gaze kept her lips pursed and sealed. They were stepping out of the portrait hole with him leading the way when an arm wrapped itself around his bony shoulders and without thinking of the many people still in the common room, Haeden recoiled back and snarled angrily at the offending person, his fangs barely unsheathing themselves.

Ron stood transfixed on the spot, his arms raised in defence. "Whoa mate, calm down."

The dark haired boy blinked. All of the Gryffindors were eyeing him warily while some of the first years cowered behind their books, he

could clearly smell the anxiety in the room. Suppressing the predator in him, Haeden bit back his cheeks and berated himself for causing such a scene.

"Harry, are you sure you're okay?" asked Hermione, and he told his exhausted brain not to lash out on the hand on his arm.

"I'm sorry about that, I was thinking and you caught me off guard." he mumbled sheepishly.

"What were you thinking about, Harry?" Hermione asked, her hand precariously still on his arm.

"Sirius." It was the only thing he could think of that could warrant such a reaction. At his words, Hermione had a knowing look on her face that he did not like while Ron just stared at him with pity. This was definitely not how he'd envisioned his morning to start.

"Let's go," he said, breaking the scrutiny of his friends and walked out of the portrait hole.

The Great Hall was already full and noisy by the time they got there and it did nothing alleviate his mad mood. A few students from the other Houses called his name, whether in cheer or in disdain, he did not care, he merely walked on towards the least occupied part of the Gryffindor table.

"Harry mate, you completely blew Ernie back there. He liked called you least at five times." said Ron, grabbing anything he could get within reach.

"He did? Mustn't have heard it." he replied casually, scanning the table for any meat, he didn't think his constitution at the moment could take anything less. Selene had taking him hunting for three consecutive days before they departed from their in-between-planes manor, to dull his cravings, she had told him. But blast it, looks like he needed to hunt again... soon.

"Harry, you're going to make yourself sick." chided Hermione at his colossal plate, which quite surprisingly held more food (bacon in particular) than Ron's.



"I'm a growing boy, 'Mione, I need my protein." he replied as if it was the most logical thing in the world.

"Grwood froow youwe maet!" cried Ron, spraying both Haeden and Hermione with spittle and others.

'And they thought we Vampyres feed in the most disgusting manner.' Thought Haeden in disgust, carefully wiping Ron's breakfast from his robes

"Sorry 'bout that, Harry." said Ron once he'd swallowed the contents of his mouth, quite horribly wiping his mouth with the back of his hand. Now Haeden was not fortunate enough to be raised with etiquettes drilled into him like some of the pureblood children he knew, however he knew well enough the need for personal hygiene, especially with having to live with two of the most disgusting pigs he'd ever seen, to know that Ron needed to revisit a few or two minor pointers on the subject. The mortal boy in front of him quite literally repulsed him, how he ever managed to get close to the Gryffindor while he was Harry was beyond him.

The longer he was coming into accepting his true identity, the more he found out that a lot of the things he liked as Harry; he didn't quite so much as appreciate now. For example, Vampyres loved blood, would kill for blood and lived on blood, but that didn't mean they liked seeing red all the time, and the Gryffindor common room had way, way to much red for his senses' liking. It was like being thrown into a sea of blood and being told that you were not aloud to drink not one drop from it. Just looking at the blindingly red room was a challenge to his control and let's not add the fifty or so beating hearts in the room; it was a young Vampyre's nightmare! How he'd survived the night without allowing his instincts free reign was beyond him.

"Oh, for Merlin's sake use a napkin Ronald! And don't talk with your mouth full." admonished the bushy haired brunette, surprisingly sounding just like Mrs. Weasley.

"What are you my mother now?" Ron shot back at the girl.

Hermione looked affronted as she crossed her arms but chose not to speak anymore, not even bothering to look at the red haired boy, which the boy gladly took as a victory and continued with his gorging.

After three pieces of bacon, Haeden berated himself for not listening to Hermione. He'd had thought that the meat would provide an ample substitute, like during the one dinner he'd boldly attended while in the manor. But he should have known that the meat there was probably prepared in a different manner to suit their sensitive Vampyric palate. Here at Hogwarts however, the meat was done to suit human palate and the bacon he'd eaten had been swimming in grease and oil and it was now playing havoc with his stomach. Fighting the urge to retch in front of the whole school, Haeden pushed his uneaten plate far away from him. But the smell of grease and oil still clung around him and he felt his stomach clench painfully.

"I told you you'd get sick." said Hermione haughtily, causing him to roll his eyes behind her back, as if she really knew the reason behind his sudden reluctance to eat.

"I just don't feel like eating anymore, Hermione." he said, wondering why he was even bothering to give the girl an explanation, and then he saw her empty plate. He looked up at the girl to find her still childishly refusing to meet Ron's eye and asked her in curiosity. "Why aren't you eating, Hermione?"

"I've decided to uphold once more a more active action in spreading elf rights." said Hermione with an air of condescension.

Her reply immediately prompted Ron to cease his ravage of his food and turned a second set of questioning eyes towards Hermione. "You're really going to do it again, Hermione? You really think that what happened to Kreacher will be atoned for by starving yourself?"

"Perhaps if people had taken SPEW seriously none of it would have happened?" snapped the irate Muggleborn.

Haeden forced down a smirk that was threatening to show on his face and for the sake of maintaining façades, he asked, "Why? What happened to Kreacher?"

Ron was about to open his mouth to speak when Hermione turned around and beat him to it, a bit of hysteria in her voice. "Oh Harry, it was horrible. It happened the night before we were all due for Hogwarts. Mrs. Weasley found him – butchered – in the Headquarters' living room. None of us, not even the Headmaster

could figure out how it happened. It was as if someone had come to headquarters and taken a knife to poor Kreacher, but that's impossible. Oh Harry, there was so much blood..."

Hermione left her words hanging, a grief stricken look upon her face.

"Urgh! Did you have to say all of that? I was eating!" cried Ron indignantly, though there was no sign of him dropping his fork anytime soon.

"That's terrible!" said Haeden in what he hoped was a mournful voice.

"It is!" agreed Hermione, glad that at least one of her friends was sharing her sentiments. "Everyone's really baffled at how it happened." She then scooted closer towards him, not noticing his clenched fist, and lowered her voice to a whisper. "I mean no one other than Order members can enter Grimmauld Place and who would want to kill an elf; especially in such a gruesome manner?"

A shiver ran down the girl's spine and Haeden could tell that the elf's death had really disturbed her, though he had to admit he did go too far into the brutal side with the way he'd dealt with the elf. But still, he found the girl's woe over the elf unnecessary; the lowly elf had after all been extremely rude and horrible to them.

Further discussion about the tragic demise of the elf soon died down and Hermione subsequently pulled out a large book from her bag to distract herself while breakfast continued around them. Ron continued to gorge down his meal like a man in death row while bringing up a Quidditch discussion with Seamus. With his initial idea of eating meat now shot down, Haeden decided that it would be best for the health of the general student population if he were to go to class early, at least outside the packed hall he would have time to bolster his control before facing a class full of students. He was just about to swing his leg out of the bench when a girl with flaming red hair pounced into the empty seat beside him.

"Ginny!" he cried out in surprise.

"Hiya Harry!" the youngest Weasley greeted. "How have you been?"

"I'm okay." he answered tentatively and awkwardly. "You?"

Ginny frowned at him but replied in a tone that told him nothing about what she really felt. "I guess you can say I've been okay too. It's been a long summer."

"Yeah, about that, sorry if I just went off like that without informing you guys." he said all of a sudden, though unlike the many times he'd said the line, this time he found that he truly meant what he was telling her, much to his surprise.

"Can't say that I blame you." she began softly, "If it were me who'd lost a loved one like that and everyone expected me to act as if nothing had happened, I would want to get away too. It's just the right thing to do if I want to remain sane."

"Thanks, Gin." he smiled genuinely at the girl, feeling light for the first time since he'd woken up.

"That's what friends are for, silly." replied Ginny happily, and he thought he'd caught her eyeing Hermione sharply for a while, but when he looked again, her attention was all on him. "I am your friend, right?" she then added, her brown eyes looking sharply at him.

"Yes, Ginny." he laughed at her exaggerated look. "You're my friend." He was extremely surprised at how much easier it was to speak with Ginny compared to Ron and Hermione. In fact, it felt exactly like how he would act in front of Selene, easy and light.

"Hey Gin, what's wrong?" he asked at the sudden frown that had etched itself on her face.

"Were you trying to eat all of that?" she asked in disbelief, pointing at his abandoned bacon laded plate.

"Yeah," he answered sheepishly, unaware of their close proximity. "Hermione tried to warn me of how I'd get sick eating all of that at once but I didn't listen. So naturally now my stomach's all upset." He'd expected the girl to reprimand him of stupidity as well but instead what he got was a deeper frown that went between his abandoned plate and his person.

"I've got to go Harry," said Ginny, getting out of her seat at once.

"Oh, okay," replied Harry but Ginny was already halfway towards the doors.

"You know she's been acting really strange all summer," he heard Hermione whisper quietly on his other side.

"Strange..." he repeated slowly under his breath, his eyes still fixed on where she had gone to.

Ten minutes before they were all due for their first lesson, the four Heads of House descended upon their students to distribute the year's class schedule.

"Ah Mr. Potter, glad to have you back with us again." said Professor McGonagall in an inconspicuous voice the moment she reached where they were sitting. Haeden wasn't given a chance to reply as she'd gone to swoop over a pair of bickering third years, though however he did notice the soft smile that had graced the Deputy Headmistress' face when she spoke to him.

Finally, not long afterwards found the three of them making their way to the Defence classroom for their first class of the day. Then as they were about to take a second flight of steps, the person he'd been most eager to see emerged from the corner ahead and he pointedly ignored the displeased looks on Ron and Hermione's faces.

"Hi Harry," said Selene, also plainly ignoring the two others with him. "Can I have a word with you?"

"We're going to be late." stated Hermione firmly before he could even speak. "And you will too."

"Oh Hermione, don't worry." Selene turned towards her as if seeing her for the first time and replied in a perfectly friendly voice. But he could see in her eyes that she would love nothing more than to strangle the witch. "I have Transfiguration first, and as Draco had kindly told me, it's just right down the hall."

Ron stared at Selene as if she was sick to even speak of Malfoy in a grateful and gentle manner, let alone saying his first name in a grateful and gentle manner. "So Harry, can I speak with you

privately? I swear it won't take a minute of your time." Selene turned her attention back towards him and his brow furrowed a bit at the urgency she saw buried in her grey eyes.

"Sure." said Haeden, taking a step away from Ron and Hermione, wary of his flesh touching theirs.

"But Harry –" started Hermione in protest.

"It's okay Hermione, I'll just be awhile. I know some shortcuts, I'll meet you guys there." said Haeden. Both Ron and Hermione looked reluctant at leaving him alone with a mere acquaintance they'd met in the train, but after further assurance that he would be just fine without them, they left, albeit still reluctantly.

"Awfully clingy those two..." said Selene the moment the pair of them were out of earshots.

"You have no idea," grumbled Haeden in reply. Selene then leaned causally against the wall and eyed him with critical eyes. "What did you want?"

"You do look a bit peaky," she mumbled, eyeing him up and down.

"Excuse me?" said Haeden, finding her scrutiny of his person uncomfortable.

"Why didn't you tell us you were feeling thirsty?" asked Selene, coming up at him rather critically.

"What? How'd you find out?" exclaimed Haeden only to be stumped dead by his sister's look.

"Never mind about how I found out, you how dangerous it is to tempt thirst, especially you!" said Selene sternly.

"Don't you think I didn't know that?" Haeden couldn't help but be hurt by her words. "I'd intended to seek you out after class. I'd thought eating meat would help but I guess you already knew that."

Selene backed up a bit and her expression softened somewhat to a few degrees, though he could tell she was still not pleased about something. She then drew three vials of red liquid from within her

robes. "Here," she said handing him the vials. "Take one now and one more after dinner. I'll try to get us out of the castle sometime tonight."

Haeden pocketed the two offered vials but downed the other one. Instantaneous relief worked its way throughout his body; he didn't even know how taut his muscles had become until he felt his arms get limber. The blood was not fresh, of that he could tell the moment he lifted the stopper from the vial, but it would tide him until the promised hunt tonight. He then flashed a smile of gratitude to Selene, looking slightly like a goof in the process.

Selene could not help but crack up at his smile; it was so easy and relaxed; a stark contrast to what she felt the boy was feeling earlier. "Do try to keep your control; it won't do any of us good if you consider every single person in the hall as a rare delicacy."

"Yes, mother!" said Haeden cheekily, walking away from the dark nook in the corridor they had unknowingly hidden in.

"Harry, wait!" Haeden turned back around at her call. "Do try to cause a bit of trouble in Potions today."

"Are you out of your mind?" cried the young Vampyre in disbelief. "You – you want me to cause trouble in Snape's class? I know I'm near immortal now, but I still value every bit of my eternal undead life."

"Don't be dramatic," said Selene lightly. "Just enough mayhem for him to give you a detention."

"Why would I want detention with him?"

"He wants to talk to you," she said and he instantly knew about what and he dreaded it.

"You do know that even without causing trouble he can give me a detention, right?" he told her impassively.

"I know. He doesn't know I'm telling you this, but it would surely lessen his guilt a bit," said Selene softly, her eyes staring right at him.

Haeden stared at her, not knowing what else to say. In the end he gave her a stiff nod.

"It's all I ask." said Selene. "I'll see you tonight." And no sooner had he bat an eyelid did he find that she was already gone and he too made his way towards his classroom with less than a minute to spare.

To say that his friends were displeased that he arrived in their classroom just as the bell rang to signal the start of classes was an understatement.

"What did she want from you?" whispered Hermione harshly. But he was thankfully saved from replying when at that exact moment the door behind the teacher's desk opened and the man that had escorted Haeden back to the common room the previous night appeared.

"Good morning class!" he called out jovially. "I am Professor Robert Monroe and I will be your new Defence Against the Dark Arts professor. You may or may have not noticed it, but I was not present during last night's feasting as I had prior family business to attend to. But never mind about that now, you are all talented, I presume, in the art of Defence as you are now all NEWT students and as you all know only those who really understand the Dark and its defences can excel in this class. And when I say only those who understand the art can excel, I mean it! I care not for theory alone, but I want passion from you all. I want to know that I am teaching students who really want to understand the Dark Arts, for how can you learn to defend yourself against it if you know not what you are defending yourself against! I want you to learn beyond that what can be found in the pages of books. As sixth year Defence students you will learn various techniques on the execution of your spells in a duel, both offensive and defensive. One of the techniques that we will be attempting to master within this year is non verbal spells!"

The man had a forceful quality in his voice that had enraptured the entire class. Even Haeden who had thought the man to be another one of the fools the Headmaster had recruited for the cursed position was hanging to every word the man said. At first glance the man's youthful face and short brown hair gave him an image of being pleasant and easy going, even the initial tone of his voice contained a childish jubilant tone to it. But once the man got to the



part about defence, his tone and countenance changed immediately, his impassioned speech about understanding the Dark before learning to fight it could only be compared to a man who had come face to face with Darkness itself.

Haeden watched the man closely as he walked down the aisle of students and began questioning them each about the different concepts of what would deem a spell Dark. Could the man have been an Auror? He certainly had the built for it, thought Haeden now that he'd come to face the man closer. He'd definitely not noticed the man's built last night. The man must have noticed his inspection for he was now walking towards him and Haeden only had a few seconds to clear his thoughts before the man came to stand tall and curious by his desk.

"Mr. Potter, we meet again." said Monroe. Haeden merely inclined his head in acknowledgement. "Tell me Mr. Potter, what advantages would a wizard have if they were to use non verbal spells?"

"The adversary would have no idea what kind of magic you are about to perform, giving the wizard a huge advantage." said Haeden, recalling the time in the stone manor (he'd come to term the huge manor as such since its exterior looked as if it was purely carved out of stone and also he really had no idea what the place was called), when Selene had bullied him into reading all of his books in advance and practicing them. He was proud to say that thanks to the reawakening of his Clandestine self and powers, Magyck just came much easier to him and he could now perfectly execute a non-verbal spell, not that any of the mortals needed to know that.

"That is correct Mr. Potter, five points to Gryffindor." He walked back up to front to face the class and told everyone to pair up, they were going to try and cast spells non-verbally.

Whether fortunate or unfortunate, Haeden was paired up with Ron. The red head clearly had no idea how to cast spells non-verbally and his lips were turning blue with the amount to concentration he was putting into casting whatever his spell was non verbally. Haeden tried to hide his annoyance at having to stand and wait for something to erupt from his partner's wand by watching the other groups in the room. It was easy for him with his heightened senses to figure out which one of them were cheating by whispering spells softly under their breath, and there were a lot of them. By the end of

the period none of them were able to cast perfectly though for the sake of pride, Haeden toned down his Magyck and forced it through his wand and performed a partial shield which made their professor shout out in delight.

Ron and Haeden had a free period after that while Hermione went for Ancient Runes. The common room was mostly empty except for the sixth and seventh years and after much persuasion from the red head, Haeden spent the whole of the free period being thrashed by him in chess. After their free period, the two of them then went down to meet Hermione and headed for lunch. Much like as it was during breakfast, Hermione touched none of the food served in the Great Hall but fished out a packet of crisp from her bag and nibbled through them while reading a thick book on Arithmancy.

Surveying the pile before him, Haeden picked up a bit of the roast, this time making sure to remove as much of the oil as he possibly could. The end result was that the roast was extremely dry, but at least it settled better in his stomach than his breakfast. After eating as much as he could, which wasn't much; he excused himself from the table and ran to the closest boy's bathroom he could find. Once he was sure that no one else was inside any of the cubicles, Haeden rummaged his cloak pocket for one of the two remaining vials of blood Selene had given it and downed it straight up. Savouring the ecstasy that quickly ran throughout his tense body, he vanished the vial and made sure that the last remaining vial was safely tucked and hidden away before going back to the Great Hall, his control thankfully bolstered after two doses of much needed blood.

Haeden was about to take his seat back in the Gryffindor table when Ron suddenly questioned him about Potions. "Hey mate, did you get into NEWT Potions?" asked the red head, his face unabashedly hoping for the exact opposite.

"Yeah I did," replied Haeden, suddenly feeling dreadful.

"Good for you Harry!" cried Hermione, looking positively delighted, much to his annoyance.

Ron pouted at this and ask, "Just how much did you get for your OWLs? You never did us."

Not being in the mood to discuss mundane topics, Haeden dug out his OWL results from his bag that Snape had taken from the Ministry on his behalf while he was hidden in-between-planes and gave it to his two inquisitive friends.

### Ordinary Wizarding Level Results

Harry James Potter has achieved the following marks in his chosen academic subjects:

Astronomy:A

Care of Magical Creatures:O

Charms:O

Defence Against the Dark Arts:O

Divination:P

Herbology:E

History of Magic:A

Potions:O

Transfiguration:O

"Eight OWLs! Harry that's wonderful! Ron scraped a decent half a dozen A's and E's but you got five O's, Mrs. Weasley will be so proud. " said Hermione, throwing herself at him and he was even more thankful that he'd decided to take his second dose now rather than later as it was taking the bulk of his self-control not to shove her halfway across the hall.

Ron however looked disappointed as he handed the sheet of parchment back to him, "Good job mate!" he said half-heartedly. Haeden cocked an eye brow at his look but didn't really care. It wasn't his fault if Ron didn't get as much OWLs as his mother wanted.

After the awkward moment (for Haeden that is), Hermione half dragged him down to the dungeons and his nerves barely had the

time to register the fact that the witch had a firm grip on his wrist with the way they were dashing through the halls. Ron had said he would meet them for dinner and went directly to Hagrid's hut after lunch, his face gloomy all throughout.

When they arrived outside the Potions classroom, a small number of students were already gathered despite it being ten more minutes before the class was to begin. Hitching up his bag more securely over his shoulder, Haeden surveyed the students who would be taking Advance Potions and realized that Snape wasn't kidding when he said only the best of the best got into NEWT level Potions, not that he'd ever known the man to ever kid around before. In total there were only six students taking up the class, he and Hermione for Gryffindor, Malfoy, Selene and Nott for Slytherin and the sole Ravenclaw was Terry Boot, who looked absolutely terrified at the prospect of being the only Raven in the class.

The ominous sound of heavy doors colliding with the stone wall quickly brought Haeden's attention back to his surroundings and found that he was standing in front of the now opened dungeon door, and at the direct path of their Potions professor. Snape's eye flashed in surprise at finding his son standing directly before him but quickly schooled his features to that of cool indifference.

"Well what are you waiting for?" he barked at the gathered students. "If you think you can pass my class by merely standing there you are sorely mistaken!" Not another word was uttered after that as the six students scuffled into the dark classroom and made their way to the front of the class. As there were so few of them, it was utterly foolish to sit at the back; therefore Haeden contented himself to sitting directly behind Terry Boot, sending an apologetic look at the boy in the process as he now had no choice but to sit in front of the professor's desk. Hermione took the seat beside him while the Slytherins occupied the desks on the other side of the room. Haeden also noted that Selene was sitting comfortably beside Malfoy, an unfortunate fact that did not go unnoticed by the brown haired witch beside him. Thankfully the girl chose not to comment on what she saw but deemed it necessary to send him a look that spoke 'you see the kind of people she hangs out with!' Indeed Haeden found it odd that after only a day his sister was now acting as if she had known Malfoy all her life; he vowed to ask the Clandestine tonight.

The dungeon door sealed shut behind them and Severus Snape strode menacingly to the front of the class, his dark robes billowing as he went. The man stood domineeringly before the class and stared at each of them one by one, as if gauging their strength and Haeden was pleasantly surprised when none of them, not even Boot, looked away from the professor's stern gaze. However when the man's eye finally reached his, he recoiled inwardly in shock. The man looked as he always did when staring at Harry Potter, his lips were upturned in a sneer while his tunnelling dark eyes pierced through him with loathing, but unlike the other times the dark man's eyes would land on him, he noticed a spark of something – pride? – flash briefly on his stoic face, softening the hate filled eyes. But before Haeden could discern anymore from the man, Snape had looked away and was once again facing the entire class.

"As you are no doubt aware, you have all received the highest possible mark in your exams and therefore considered as the best amongst your peers. Some of you I knew from the very beginning would be here with me today –" His eyes glancing towards Malfoy. "– while others... have surprised me." At this his dark eyes landed on him and he had half the mind to either slid down under the desk in embarrassment or preen in delight, he had after all surprised Severus Snape.

"After five years of learning Potions, I expect nothing but absolute obedience in this class. You are sixth year NEWT students so unless the Ministry is in your payroll and have coerced them into doctoring your grade; I expect each and every one of you to have at least a much greater understanding in the science of potion making compared to your previous years. Furthermore, in the two years you have before NEWTs, your classes will be equally divided between theory and practical brewing. If any of you even dare to attempt to come to my class without prior knowledge of the day's lesson, you will find out just how lenient I have been with you in your detentions."

A collective shudder was released by the entire class at the professor's word, but Haeden was not at all surprised that the man, under his many mask, was still capable of making their lives much worse. Now he was really having second thoughts about causing trouble on his first day, he did not want to find out how much worse Snape could get. Familiar connection be damned, he knew the man would not hold out even on his own children!

Though deep down, he longed for his thoughts to be false. Really really false.

For the rest of the period Snape had them pairing up with each other and told them to pick out a potion from the list of potions they'd done in the last five years and attempt to brew it by memory. Marks would then be given out depending on the consistency and accurateness of the potion.

Haeden had no choice but to pair up with Hermione and together they chose the Shrinking Solution from their third year. He thankfully remembered this particular potion, recalling the infamous incident when their professor turned Neville's pet frog into a tadpole. However he had more faith in Hermione recalling the ingredients better than him and therefore cajoled her to go and pick out the ingredients from the student cupboard while he stayed behind to prepare their cauldron.

While meticulously chopping up his daisy roots, Haeden discovered that unlike their previous years, Snape was actually decent to them. Once or twice he'd actually heard the man commenting on how each of their brewing was without a hint of deride in his voice and he told of his observations to Hermione.

"I suppose it's because we've all proven ourselves capable to him and that we understand exactly how delicate potions are. One does not achieve an O in OWLs if one is a dunderhead after all." said Hermione, causing him to smirk. "I also think he really had to be hard on us so that we don't mess around. We all know how volatile each potion can get, and if it means I have to be extra hard on my students to be able to keep them safe while trying to impart to them invaluable information, I would do it."

Haeden thought long and hard on what Hermione had said and was shocked when he realized that what she'd said had been entirely true. Snape did care, in his own Snape-ish way, and it scared him.

After thirty minutes of slaving over their bubbling cauldron, their potion finally turned a bright acid green, exactly as how they had done it three years back.

'Now or never,' thought Haeden and waited for the professor to inspect their work, he at least wanted to give their potion a chance to be examined before he doomed himself to eternal suffering, and for a Vampyre like him, it was saying something. Snape was now in front of them and was taking a ladle into their potion when Haeden carefully, making sure that he did not have his professor's attention, brushed his hand across their worktable, dropping one too many unwanted rat spleen into their cauldron. The result was just like he'd remembered in their third year. The potion bubbled dangerously before turning orange. He'd completely and utterly ruined their potion in one fluid move of his hand.

"Harry!" Hermione cried beside him.

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Snape intentionally chose to examine his son's potion last and was pleased that they had managed to brew a perfect Shrinking Solution. But he of course did not show his pride over his son since he now had to unfairly criticize the boy's perfect work just to be able to spend some time with him without dragging the old man's suspicion; he just prayed his son would understand. He was about to open his mouth to criticize a nonexistent fault in their potion when a calculated movement from his son caught his attention.

The boy had his hand lying dangerously close over a pile of unused rat spleen and Severus' eyes widened briefly as he realized what the boy was up to. And sure enough the boy's hand casually brushed over the table top, successfully dumping too much rat spleen into the potion and deeming it useless.

A heavy silence followed Granger's high pitched exclamation and Severus looked like he was all about ready to chew them and spit them back out. And because of his new found genuine anger, he failed to notice the relieved look on his daughter's face and the subtle exchange his two children had.

"Potter, explain yourself!" he exclaimed.

"I don't know, sir." replied the boy timidly, his head bowed down.

Severus didn't know what to do. One moment he was guilty about the fact that he had to criticize his son's perfect work only to find out

that the boy had all the intention of ruining it. It was all enough to make Severus want to pull out all of his hair.

"Detention Mr. Potter, for deliberately sabotaging your own work!" cried Severus and Haeden lifted his head in surprise. "You heard me Mr. Potter. Meet me here at eight o'clock sharp. Do not even attempt of arriving a second late!"

The sound of a bell rang distantly signalling the end of the period and everyone began shuffling out of the door. Once they were out of the confined spaces of the dark dungeon, Hermione quickly grabbed his hand.

"What were you thinking!" she hissed out in anger.

"Nothing!" cried Haeden in equal anger, pulling his arm from her grip. "It was an accident."

"But he said..." trailed Hermione, all ire draining away just as quickly as it had come.

"You how Snape is always out to get me, Hermione. It's perfectly him to send me to detention on our first day back." said Haeden, wanting nothing more than to get as far away from the dungeons as possible.

"You should be careful next time," said Hermione, completely back to normal.

"That is if I survive tonight for me to have a next time." Haeden strode quickly away from the potions corridor with Hermione trailing behind him. As they rounded the last of the corridors leading away from the dungeons, Haeden caught sight of Selene and saw her mouthing the words 'thank you' at his direction. He nodded to indicate that he had understood her but made no further insinuation that he'd acknowledged her presence.

He had a feeling that tonight would be one of the longest nights of his undead life.

Long author's note alert... (read if you want more information)



A/N: There you go, I've finally given you a concrete identity on who one of my 'obscure OC's' (as many of you like to call them) is. Was it really a surprise? There were a few hints thrown here and there on who she really is. Now who can tell me who the remaining 'obscure' characters are? I assure you that if you've been reading this properly the identities of the two remaining hooded figures wouldn't be a surprise.

Many have asked about Draco's role in here but I'm not telling anything yet. You just have to make do with Haeden's deductions though he is much more observant and knowledgeable compared to when he was controlled by the MOB (Manipulative Old Bastard), so it might not take long for him to figure it out.

As for Haeden's relationship with his parent's, he's slowly getting there but I think I'll be throwing in a few more problems for them before they finally reconcile. As you can see Haeden is realizing more and more things about his father that he'd never noticed before. So their reunion is somewhere along the horizon, though don't expect it soon and to take a leaf out of my favourite OC, "Where's the fun in that?"

So far I don't know if Lily will be making any appearances in the coming chapters, she is after all believed to be dead by the wizarding community. However her presence will be present all throughout, it's just not time for her to make an up front appearance. But don't worry, her time will come and shock them she will.

I think that's about it for now, I'm still at a lost at what to do with the Ministry but let's just see where this story takes us. I have a goal where I want the story to go but I'm mostly going by this chapter by chapter so we'll see what happens.

By the way, I'll be leaving for Singapore for a month (you didn't really think that I'd cope myself up at home for the entire summer break, did you now?) so I don't know when the next chapter will be up. The good thing about that is that I get to have internet access 24/7! I don't really know what that will mean to me fanfic-wise but at least I'm now online 24 hours for a whole month, so if you want me to reply to your comments and questions, just leave your email address in your reviews!

Last but not the least, +300 Of you have me in your Alerts and Favourites list but please drop a review, they're a writer's bread and wine. So please take time to click the review button just below this page. (Paging reviewers. Paging reviewers, please line up on aisle ten to your secure pen and papers. Reviews will then be dropped on favourite authors' waiting arms. Paging reviewers. Paging reviewers. Please line up on aisle ten!)

read and review..,

'til next post...

dan4eva

## Chapter 23 Detention

Twisting his quill with a final flourish, Haeden reread his final draft of the essay Professor Monroe had them do about the difference of wandless magic and non verbal spells before curling it up and tossing it into his open book bag. His only assignment done – unfortunately, he now had nothing else to distract him from the ruckus that was the norm atmosphere in the Gryffindor Tower. He looked up at the grandfather clock beside the fireplace and saw that he still had a quarter of an hour left before his assigned detention with Professor Snape. Leaning back on his chair, his two friends still not having noticed his completion of their assignment, tried to make himself as much at ease as he could in the crowded room and took the opportunity to survey the tower in a different light.

Skimming through the memories he retained as Harry Potter, he knew that this place was held as something sort of a sanctuary for the now nonexistent Boy-Who-Lived. But as with all things that once concerned his former self, Haeden could not find it in him to once again appreciate the comforts of the Gryffindor common room. There were just far too many distractions and wild emotions for his highly sensitive senses and the colours were just simply far too loud for his taste. Vampire or not, red was just NOT his colour. No, Gryffindor was just too – unruly – for him. He could clearly see why his House was in least favourable light to the Potions Master, Gryffindors simply had no sense of subtlety and decorum.

Bah! I'm sounding like Malfoy! He thought to himself. But he could not help it, loath as he may what happened to him in the past, he could not change the fact that he was slowly changing into the person he would have been had Dumbledore not meddled the way he did. And the sooner he accepted this fact, the less mad he would become. There was just no way around denying your own thoughts without first going around the bend.

Looking around again, he noted in his mental list of the things he now found unbearable that when he woke up this morning and during the time he and Ron had stayed in the common room during their common free period, the tower held little to no student, but now that dinner was over and that curfew was only a few hours away, every single Gryffindor had now congregated in the common room and every single one of them was making some kind of noise and unfortunately for him, he could hear every single one of them in his

head. It was as if he possessed a hundred stubborn people in his head all wanting to be heard, it was literally driving him over the edge of his volatile control. Breakfast, lunch and dinner he could take in stride because of Selene's help, mentally bolstering his control. He knew that the female Vampyre did not know that he knew of her aiding him during those times he was in the open area of the Great Hall and he had no intention of telling her to quit helping him. But with her miles below him...

After yet another shriek from one of the giggly girls in the corner, Haeden let out a shaky breath and ran his weary hand through his hair and gently massaged his throbbing head. He could of course block out all unwanted noises and intrusions from his mind but he had yet to master the art of dual focus Selene had taught him over the summer and when he'd tried to block out the thoughts of all of his classmates, he ended up being scolded by Granger for not paying attention. Needless to say he didn't want to try it again at such close proximity to the irritating witch.

A sharp snap from their table brought him out of his silent observations and smirked inwardly at Granger's ruffled expression. It seemed that he wasn't the only one fed up with all of the noise.

"This is ridiculous!" snapped the girl, tossing her now ruined feather quill. "How anyone can work with all this din is beyond me!"

Haeden, after the events of the last few months, wasn't feeling as comfortable around the clever witch as he was before and the feeling only intensified by the fact that ever since their meeting in the train and to this day, she had yet to mention ever writing a letter that practically blamed him for everything. To him it was as if the girl was trying to deny ever doing such a thing by not broaching the topic and thinking that he had forgotten about it. But the fleeting irritation he saw in her eyes made her seem like the old Hermione he knew, the one who had nothing on her mind but studying, and he flashed a look of genuine commiseration and the both of them then turned towards the third person that made up the so called "Golden Trio".

For all the common room to see it looked like Ronald Weasley had finally decided to get serious with his NEWT studies and was currently immersing himself in schoolwork when in all actuality the head that was propped up by left his hand was in danger of sliding

off due to the lax grip of its owner. And to add more to its faint sounds could be heard coming from him.

Ronald Weasley was fast asleep.

"Ron!" cried Hermione, shaking the redhead in the shoulder and effectively causing him to drop his hold on his head in surprise. Table and head met with a resounding thud.

"Bloody hell Hermione –" began Weasley only to be silenced by the witch's ire.

Hermione was leaning so close towards Ron that her entire body nearly covered the table, her face set. "Do not swear at me Ronald! You're a Prefect; you're supposed to set a good example to the younger years. It's only the first day back and you're shrinking at work again, honestly Ron!"

Ron glared at Hermione but the effect was greatly diminished by the large, wrinkled, red hand-shaped mark on the left side of his face. "Exactly Hermione, it's only our first day back. We have a week to finish the damn essay. I don't see why we have to do anything on our first night back." said Ron grumpily, looking enviously at the tricks Dean and Seamus were performing before a crowd of captivated first years.

"I am only trying to help you here Ron." exclaimed Hermione. "We're NEWT students now and our lessons will only get harder. If you don't finish your work early, they're going to pile up and then what are you going to do?"

"I appreciate your concern, Hermione," said Ron, though his voice implied the exact opposite. "But you're not my mother, so stop trying to run my life."

Hermione pursed her lips tightly, not one to burst out in anger. "Why can't you take your studies seriously for once? Look at Harry, he's already done his."

Haeden's head snapped in attention at hearing his name, he had been trying to buffer as much interference as he could and had completely tuned out their conversation the moment Hermione first opened her mouth and he was not at all pleased at being dragged

into their constant quarrelling. "I have nothing to do with this." he said nonchalantly.

A brief scowl graced Ron's face before looking away from him and turning his gaze back at Hermione. "I'm going to bed; I'll finish the essay another time."

The youngest Weasley gathered his belongings and dumped them unceremoniously into his tattered bag before marching up to the boy's dormitory, all the way ignoring Hermione's exasperated calls which soon faded into the ruckus.

"Argh! Why won't he grow up?" mumbled Hermione in exasperation. "I'm only trying to help him."

The young Vampyre was all ready to comfort the witch because even without the aid of his senses, he could tell that Hermione was truly sincere in trying to help Ron in his studies, although she was going about it in the wrong way, when his friend's fiery brown eyes turned on him and whatever remaining good intention he harboured towards the girl's plight vanished.

"Aren't you supposed to be in detention?" her tone taking that of a displeased mother.

Haeden glared at her but took a glance back at the grandfather clock and bolted immediately out of his seat when he noticed he barely had five minutes left to get to the dungeons. Scooping up his bag from the floor, he made a dash for the portrait hole. In his haste, he would have crashed horribly with the unsuspecting person that had chosen that particular moment to pass by the Gryffindor Tower if said unsuspecting person had not side stepped him and grabbed his arm before he collided painfully with the wall.

"What's the hurry, Harry Potter?" asked Luna, twisting the older boy's arm so that they were facing each other.

"Detention." Haeden was able to utter before running off once again to the direction of the dungeon, he wouldn't put it past Snape to punish him even more if he arrived a minute late.

"Good luck." He heard the Ravenclaw's soft voice say behind him and waved his hand to signal that he had heard her, not even registering the fact that he was already a full corridor away from her.

Thankfully Haden had not met anymore obstacles on his way down to the dungeons and without even breaking any sweat he arrived with barely a few seconds to spare. Gathering himself, he tugged his bag more comfortably over his shoulder and knocked tentatively on his Professor's door. Outside, his façade was cool and collected, much as it had been in the manor, but inside his stomach was squirming in protest. He knew that the man wanted to talk to him about last night's events, but now that he'd really caused something worth getting a detention, he really had no idea what was in store for him. He had half the mind to ditch his detention when all of a sudden the dungeon door opened, revealing a face he had not expected to see up close for awhile.

"Malfoy!" he cried in disgust before he could stop himself.

Draco Malfoy, his hand still on the door's silver handle, stood unfazed by the Gryffindor's less than civil tone and greeted him in a less hostile manner, clearly shocking the dark haired boy.

"Potter." he intoned with a slight tilt of his head. Haeden just stood mutely out in corridor, watching in surprise the face of his long-time rival and noting the absence of his usual Malfoy sneer and derisive tone. For his part, the Slytherin's gaze was also fixed on his rival, his silver-grey eyes searching the younger boy in what seemed like curiosity. But before either one of the boys could say something degrading and land themselves in a whole lot of trouble, a sharp voice cut threw their intense scrutiny.

"Get in Mr. Potter!"

Unconsciously, following the firm tones of the older Slytherin, Haeden shuffled towards the dark office. By the time he realized what he'd done, he was already standing in the middle of the office with two pairs of eyes watching him intently. Haeden felt their stares on the back of his neck and quickly lowered his head, his face burning hotly.

Draco watched with barely concealed amusement how Harry immediately rushed into the office at the sound of their professor's

commanding voice. He doubt the Gryffindor even realized what he was doing and could barely contain his mirth when a deep shade of red coloured the dark haired boy's pale cheeks.

"Professor, I'll take my leave now." said Draco, directing his gaze away from the embarrassed Gryffindor and towards his Head of House, who was still looking at the boy stoically, though in his eyes he could see that the man was also amused by the boy's action.

Severus looked up from where his son was standing and addressed his student who was still holding the door open, "Very well Draco, remember what we have discussed and make sure to watch over the boy." he said sternly, his voice expecting nothing but complete adherence.

"Yes, sir." replied Draco, nodding towards his Head of House before exiting the office. As soon as the heavy dungeon door closed with a dull thud, Haeden felt his stomach clench uncomfortably. This would be the first time he would be alone with the professor since that day after his Release, when in a fit of frenzy, he'd attacked the man and stuck a wand to his back.

He tried to gauge the man's thoughts but even opening up his senses did nothing to get a feel of the stoic man and instead he felt the man's cold eyes on him. Not really wanting to see what he would find in the dark eyes, he refused to look up and meet the man. If he had the ability to scorch objects with just his eyes, the Potion's Master Oriental rug would have turned to ashes long ago with the length his eyes were fixed on the floor.

Finally he heard the man sigh deeply before heading off towards the back of his office. Once he'd deemed it manageable to look up, Haeden took the time to look around the room and saw by the sink a pile of filthy looking cauldrons. Noticing nothing else that Snape would find appropriate for such a detention, Haeden lowered his bag on a nearby chair and proceeded towards the dirty pile.

'Might as well get it over with,' he thought in resignation, scouring the counter for any cleaning materials.

He was about halfway thorough his first cauldron when the door behind the professor's desk opened.



"What are you doing?" intoned a very much surprised Severus Snape.

Haeden thanked his Vampyre enhanced senses that he was able to grab hold of both the cauldron and the brush before they dropped to the stone floor. "Merlin, where did you come from? I didn't even hear you!" he blurted out but too soon realized his mistake at shouting at the professor and immediately bowed his head down. "I'm sorry sir."

Severus fought to suppress the smile that dared to tug at his face and stared in surprise at the boy's daring, not even his Slytherins dared to speak to him like that. It lightened his heart so to see that a part of his son was comfortable enough around him to be able to express his thoughts like that.

"I'm sure that in time and with constant training you'll be able to do it to." said Severus, taking his seat behind his desk, surveying his son closely with cool eyes.

Haeden raised his head in confusion, never before had the professor spoken to him in that manner. "Sir?"

"It's called Stealth, son. One of the many skills that you'll come to learn in time." explained Severus. "Now, you haven't told me what you are doing."

"Cleaning the cauldrons sir," replied Haeden, not seeing where the conversation was going and barely managing to add sir at the end of his sentence.

"I can see that, childe." said Severus, tilting his head a fraction towards his direction, a hint of amusement visible in his dark eyes. "But why are you cleaning them?"

Haeden stared widely at his professor. Had the man completely lost it? Here he was, as the man had asked, serving his detention and he had the nerve to laugh at him? Haeden's insides burned and his hold on the scrubbing brush tightened.

'Greasy old bat!' he thought vehemently, trying to stop the majority of the shakes that were threatening to engulf him.

Leaning forward his desk, Severus asked in a much edgier tone of voice, ignoring the fact that he'd heard loud and clear his son's thoughts about him. "So are you going to answer me or not, Haeden?"

"It's Harry!" corrected the Gryffindor angrily.

"I'm well aware of what Potter named you," said Severus coolly, though managing to spit out his archenemy's last name. "But as you are in my presence, you will be called as such what you're mother and I intended to call you."

"What if someone hears?" argued Haeden further. He wasn't particularly keen on having his secret found out.

Waving his hand around the office in a very uncharacteristic way, Severus said, "My office and private quarters are heavily guarded. Dumbledore himself would not be able to enter without my prior knowledge, so you need not worry about anyone finding out. But enough about this, why are you cleaning the cauldrons?"

"Detention, sir." Haeden managed to grit out over his anger. "You gave me a detention."

"Ah, detention." Severus repeated, leaning back on his chair. "Well that sure explains things, but you can put that down now." He then gestured for the armchair in front of his desk.

"But I messed up my potion!" cried Haeden, staring incredulously at the annoyingly indifferent man and not really knowing why he was arguing. This time the man allowed a brief smile to break his face and it mentally sent him over his head. Sure he'd seen a less cranky, less mean version of Severus Snape during his stay at the manor, but never once did he see the man smile, much less grin at anything else. He was pulled out from his recollection of the man's behaviour during the summer when said man spoke.

"Much as I find your willingness to atone to your mistake refreshing, you'll find that if I'd indeed wanted to punish you for deliberately ruining your potion, you'd be doing much more than scrubbing cauldrons." said Severus, his voice managing to take a threatening tone despite the amusement in his face. "Now please take a seat!"

Taking measured deep breaths to calm himself, Haeden tossed the scrubbing brush back in the sink and replaced the cauldron back on the counter before making his way slowly towards the seat Snape had indicated. "How did you know?" he asked once he was seated.

Severus quirked a brow and said, "How did I know that you deliberately ruined your own potion?" Haeden nodded. "First off you have got to remember that you're not the only one with Vampyric senses. How'd you think I was able to detect many of your friends' less than friendly attempts over the years to sabotage my class?"

Haeden frowned, knowing that all those years they thought they'd gone undetected was indeed just that, they thought. How many times had Snape turned a blind eye to their stunts in the dungeon? It clearly wasn't as much compared to his Slytherins, but he nevertheless did and the knowledge sent his mind brewing.

"Secondly," continued Severus in a lecturing manner, "Gryffindors are idiotically brave and reckless, but rarely are they suicidal. They are too stubborn to take that route."

Haeden tried to find it in him to feel insulted by the man's curt words, he really did, but just couldn't. The man may resent the lion's house to the point of absurdity, but his assertions were not far from the truth. "Fair enough," he acknowledged after awhile. "I think I said something in the same line as that to Selene." As soon as the words left his mouth, he watched in fascination as the stoic face of his professor morphed into that of sheer surprise.

"Yes, I believe that girl has the both of us spun around her thumb," replied Snape once he'd regained his composure, it seemed that his son was slowly but surely shedding the Potter persona that he was certain would have been furious at such a comment about his House. "And third, I can smell that girl's handiwork from miles away. It is she who told you to ruin your potion, isn't?"

"She said you wanted to speak to me," replied Haeden in forced indifference. He didn't need to use his abilities to know what topic his professor wished to discuss with him and if it were up to him, he wouldn't want to have the impending discussion at all.

"I do," said Severus and before Haeden could prepare himself, the man had left his post behind the large desk that separated them and was now moving towards the one other chair in front of him. Haeden's cautious wide eyes followed the man's every move until he'd seated himself before him, leaning slightly forward so as to be in the same level as him. Gone was the stern and amused Potions Master, and in its place was a worried father.

"Haeden," the dark man began gently and soothingly, extending his hand towards his. "I meant every word I said the other night. He will not get away with addling with your memories, I swear on my own Magyck, childe. I swear on it, I will not let this happen again."

Haeden felt a surge of Magyck rush from the man's hands before tongues of flame wrapped around both heir hands. There was no heat in the flames but as he stared down at the large calloused hand that had grabbed his in a surprisingly warm hold, a knot slowly weaved its way in his chest, making it hard for him to breathe and think clearly. Was this how one is supposed to feel at a father's concern, a strange warmth that surges throughout your body, engulfing you in its comforting heat? Like nothing could ever go wrong again? But sadly he'd had never had the chance to feel a father's concern and therefore could not determine whether it was so.

Slowly freeing his hand from the professor's comforting grip, Haeden pulled his hands towards his chest, terminating whatever Magyckal connection they had forged and refusing to speak and to acknowledge the entirely new sensation brewing in him or to brood over last night's events. Though he could not recall what truly transpired that night, the emotional strain of trying to figure out exactly which part of his life was not some fragmented memory created by the headmaster to remain under his thumb had exhausted him and rendered him frustrated. All summer he'd been questioning his life and how he'd always followed the orders of others, thinking that they had his best interest at heart. And finally now, his questions had their answer, never once in his life had he made a decision for himself, because somehow Dumbledore was always there to remove any independent thought. He was the perfect pawn, powerful yet controllable by means of erasing his memories. He had been indeed nothing more than a pathetic shell, a helpless puppet moving at the tugs of the puppet master.

"Can we please not talk about this now?" he said, desperately trying to smother his depressing thoughts.

Severus watched his son's warring thoughts play in his eyes. "Son, you have to let us help you. Let us in, I know exactly how you feel." he said, reaching out to the boy once more.

"Do you?" Haeden's eyes burned in anger. "Do you really? Or are you just saying that so you could get me to spill out my guts to you?"

"Yes, Haeden. I do." said Severus firmly, he would not allow his son to think that he was alone once more. Not now, not ever. "I know how it feels to question your life. Heck, I think I know better than anyone else how it feels to be thrown in so many situations without ever knowing where you're going to land next. Let me help you, childe."

It was uncanny how both father and son had similar past. One was abused by his adopted grandfather like the other was neglected by his aunt and uncle. Then both of them grew to question themselves, each of them lost to their true identity until dangers beyond comprehension opened their eyes to a world of deceit and it was only then were their true lives revealed, and all the while in the backdrop of a power hungry wizard bent on destroying their new found identities. They had both done things they had no power over just because the puppet master decided to tug at their strings. However over the years Severus had managed to sever most of those strings Dumbledore had over him and he was going to do all he could to do the same for his son.

Haeden could not help but be drawn into his father's gaze (yes, just this once he allowed himself to acknowledge the man), his anger slowly ebbing away. Severus' eyes were dark and deep, desperately trying to tell him that he too had experienced being helpless, that he truly did understand what he was going through. But for the life of him he could not get himself to open up to the man, despite the fact that he was desperate for someone to understand him, to have someone tell him that everything would be okay and that he would finally be safe and free. Had Dumbledore altered him so much in his past that he was now so adverse to the prospect of a caring family? He was not blind to the things his mother and father had done over the summer to ensure his safety and if he was to be truly honest with himself, he had already forgiven them for leaving him behind.

Yet there was a large difference between forgiveness and forgetting, for he didn't know if he could ever forget the feeling of being abandoned and having his entire life dictated to him whether he knew it or not.

He wanted to scream at Dumbledore for ever making him feel that way. He wanted the old man to feel now numbing it was to question your own existence over and over again until all that was in him was a hollowness he could never seem to feel. He wanted to see every part of the ancient wizard torture for ever making him hurt his own family when all they ever did was protect him.

After awhile the staring became too uncomfortable for him and he looked away, the sensation within him that had started earlier as a slow bubble now escalating into full blown turmoil. He had to get out of here. Time seemed to crawl ever so slowly as both of them were lost to their own troubling thoughts. But eventually Severus came to the realization that his son would not speak to him today and that keeping him here further when he was already elsewhere was not a good way to breed trust between them.

"Very well Haeden, you may go." said Severus, leaning back on his chair, his face once again smooth and void of any emotions.

Haeden bolted out his seat the moment the words left his professor's mouth. However he did have enough manners in him not to run for the door. He was only a few more feet away from the welcoming dim lights of the corridor when the professor called him out, causing him to halt in his steps, his hands frozen over the door handle.

"If you ever need me, just use your ring and I'll be able to find you wherever you are and vice-versa. Goodnight son." Haeden swallowed past the large lump in his throat, the silver ring and chain that he had hidden under his robes like Selene suddenly felt warm on his skin.

"Goodnight professor," he mumbled hurriedly before closing the dungeon door sharply behind him.

The skies had darkened greatly during his stay in the dungeons and now the moon shone brightly overhead, its subtle beams illuminating the dark halls of the castle. However none of these were noticed by

Haeden as he tried to make his way quickly back towards the Gryffindor tower so as to prevent his already troubled mind from wandering further into unwanted thoughts. There was also the fact that it was way past curfew and he did not want to have Filch on his back anytime soon. The portrait of the Fat Lady was already in sight when a tall figure emerged from the shadows.

Selene motioned for him to come towards her but his eyes looked past her and headed instead for the portrait hall. When the female Vampyre realized he was not acknowledging her presence, he found himself pinned forcefully on the stone wall.

"What the –" he cried out in surprise only to see a playful glint on the Clandestine's grey eyes.

"We have a date, or have you forgotten?" said Selene in jest, her lips pouting in a ridiculous manner.

Haeden stared at his sister incredulously. "Let me go, Lin!" he cried, struggling to get free from her strong grip.

"Not until you've calmed down." replied Selene.

"I am calm!" snarled the Gryffindor, eyeing the older girl murderously.

"Very well, keep telling yourself that. But do remember that I can keep you pinned up here for hours without ever breaking a sweat." said Selene matter-of-factly.

Haeden glared at his sister for all it was worth, further drawing out an amused smile from the girl. But finally after a few more useless attempts at escape, he gave up. "Fine, fine, fine, fine." he drawled out dramatically, causing Selene to raise her brow at him. "You win. Now can you please let me go?"

Selene flashed a mischievous grin before releasing her hold on him and he fell unceremoniously in a heap on the stone floor.

"Thank you," said Haeden, pulling himself to his feet and dusting himself.

"You're welcome." replied the girl cheerfully.

"One day Selene, you won't be able to pin me or over power me ever again." said Haeden darkly.

Selene huffed, arms crossed before her chest, her jovial expression now gone. "That day may come even closer if you just let mom and dad help you."

Haeden sighed and ran a hand tiredly through his hair, a habit he'd unknowingly acquire during times of discomfort. "Drop it Selene. I can only take so much of that conversation a day."

"Fine!" said Selene, though she displeased by his constant dodging. "But are we still on for that hunt tonight? I've already made arrangements."

"Well since you've made arrangements, it seems like I have no other choice."

"That's not what I meant; of course you have a choice. Don't ever say such a thing!" exclaimed Selene with a frown.

"If I don't want to have to explain to the mortals why all my classmates have bite marks on their necks tomorrow, I have no choice but to hunt with you tonight. But I appreciate you saying I do have a choice." said Haeden, finding himself calm for the first time tonight.

"You do Haeden," said Selene firmly, placing a comforting hand on the dark haired boy's tense shoulders. "I won't even try to claim that I understand what it feels like to go through what you've gone through in the past but Haeden, for once please try to acknowledge that things are different now. It may not seem so right now but you're not Harry anymore and that in itself is a huge difference. You're now Haeden Snape, as you were supposed to be, a young Vampyre with an eternity ahead of him and with family who will do whatever it takes to make sure that Dumbledore will not claim you as his tool again. Please do not ever forget that. You will always have choices. No one can ever take that away from you."

"Funny you should mention that," mumbled Haeden, a faraway look on his face. "Dumbledore told me once, told Harry once, that it was our choices that showed who we truly are, far more than our abilities. It seems I was really deluded by him to ever believe his hypocritical



words when never in my life had he ever made me make my own choice, only an illusion of a choice."

"Hey," Selene snapped a finger in front of him, causing him to turn in surprise. "Enough of these dark thoughts. We've already established long before that Dumbledork is nothing but an old fool so let's get out of here before Filch catches us."

'Bossy woman.'

"I can hear you, you idiot!" exclaimed the female Vampyre, smacking the back of the Gryffindor's head. "Now get up to the tower and get that invisibility cloak of yours."

Haeden glared furiously at his sister, rubbing the tender spot that had come into contact with the Vampyre's heavy hand. "My invisibility cloak? Why do we need my invisibility cloak? Aren't we able to walk silently through the halls without being seen?"

"I can," replied Selene confidently. "But unfortunately I can't say the same for you. You still need more practice if you don't want Dumbledore detecting you. You still walk as if you're the son of a troll. "

Haeden stuck out his tongue childishly at the girl but knew that what she said was true. He still had a long way to go before he could use his abilities seamlessly. "You know you could have just told me that I haven't perfected the skill yet instead of throwing another insult at me. And here I was thinking that after all your encouraging words; you'd lay off on the sarcasm just for tonight."

"But where's the fun in that?" exclaimed Selene, her face filled with mirth.

"You're impossible!" said Haeden, walking towards the Gryffindor tower.

"And you're an angsty teenager."

Haeden couldn't help but grin as he stepped through the portrait hole.

Read and review

'til next post

dan4eva

## Chapter 24 Warren McArthur

He knew he was tiring – and fast, weeks of running and hiding had finally caught up to him. But he wouldn't give his pursuers the satisfaction of finally snaring him like a helpless animal. He retraced his steps through the darkening woods and ended up standing beneath the shadows of a looming tree. He took hold of one of the tree's lower branches and effortlessly swung himself up the tree. Perched like a bird of prey he took to the shadows of the tree and waited for his pursuers to reach his location; he would not go down without a fight!

In the length that he had stationed himself on the tree, the thirst he had so easily ignored in favour of making it through the Gates without having to make a detour slammed to the fore of his senses, nearly blinding him with the pain that came with it. The whites of his eyes now slowly turning the colour of night, the Vampyre emitted a feral growl that would send a lesser man cowering in fear. And then as fate would have it, two figures draped in dark blue robes emerged from darkness. The pair, without actually being one with the shadows, was so ensconced by it that they would have remained unnoticed to anyone who didn't know of their existence. It just so happened that the Vampyre knew exactly who the pair of strangers were and could therefore sense them even in the midst of darkness. However due to his weakened state it meant that the pair could also sense his location even better now that the mask covering his Magyckal signature was down. It was probably the reason why they were able to catch up with him.

"Come out, come out Vampyre. We know you're in here, we can feel you oozing with Magyck." goaded the stouter of the two, walking around the vicinity of where he was hiding.

The Vampyre bared his teeth silently at the two, both his fangs dripping with venom. Oh what he would do to once more have a taste of human blood!

"Listen here Vampyre, you can show yourself now and make it easier for us or you could continue hiding and make it even harder for yourself. We all here know you've almost reached your limit and it won't be long before you finally lose control." said the other pursuer, the lanky one. "Give up Vampyre!"

"Go to hell!" the Vampyre couldn't help but snarl.

The pair of blue robed men ceased their searching and turned to face in unison at the source of the voice. Lanky was the first to step away from the shadows and the moonlight revealed a face obscured by a hood and a dark blue cloth that had a Griffin poised for attack emblazon on it, covered everything but his eyes. The Vampyre thought he looked liked a wizard's version of what Muggles called ninja. There was now no doubt in the lusting Vampyre's mind who wanted to capture him, for only one person had created a secret army he called Trackers to achieve his means. The bright orange sash wrapped around the man's waist told the Vampyre of his pursuer's rank in the field. White meant that the Tracker was in training and that this was his first mission. As soon as a Tracker had successfully completed his first mission, they would don a yellow sash, stating that they were now part of a squad. Orange meant that they were a squadron captain and red meant that they were a Master in their chosen field. The Tracker's other partner, Stout, donned the same attire and the pair of them marched towards his general location. The old man must really want him if he sent two captain Trackers trekking around the Continent just to get him.

The Vampyre could see the victorious glint in their eyes and would bet that beneath their hood they were smirking at him. He leapt cautiously over to the next tree, making as little noise as possible and all the while the burning thirst in him made him want to lunge at the Trackers.

"Let's make a deal Vampyre, if you surrender now we'll make it nice and painless for you. What say you?" asked Lanky, striding towards his new perch on the trees.

"How about I suck you dry?" cried the Vampyre, trying to fight off the spasms that were now working through his body.

The eyes of the smaller Tracker contracted in fear at the thought of having a Vampyre feed off him but mustered up the courage to bark, though albeit shakily, at the elusive Vampyre. "How about we suck you dry? How would you like that, eh? I for one would love to see a Clandestine completely stripped off his abilities."

The Vampyre bared his fangs at them in a feral snarl from his perch above the tree, his weakened state making it harder for him to stay

focus. He had to get away from these two as soon as possible and knew that he was at a disadvantage after weeks of running and not feeding. At any given day he would have loved the challenge of fighting two captain Trackers but now he feared what would become of him if ever they managed to capture him. He fingered the invisible ancient ring around his mid finger and hoped that he'd be able to get out of this alive.

He watched as the lanky Tracker conjured a crystal in his hands and pointed it straight at where he was currently hiding. His eyes widened and suddenly felt cold sweat run down his spine at the sight of the crystal held within the Tracker's outstretched arm. He didn't know what it was, but if he was to go by the superior smirk on the Tracker's face, he knew it was no good. He was just about to leap towards another tree when the Tracker uttered an unknown incantation that immediately brought him down. Bolts of lightening escaped from the crystal and all of them were heading towards him, encapsulating him and sending shockwaves through his already frail body.

As he was hit by the bolts mid-leap, his paralyzed body fell down on the damp forest floor with a dull thud and the last conscious thing he was made aware of before passing out was the triumphant laughter of the two Trackers.

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The rest of the month passed by in a disconcerting blur. After the promised hunting by Selene, Haeden's control over his yearnings finally started to take hold however he still could not tolerate physical touch from a mortal lest it trigger a reawakening of his more animalistic instincts. Twice he'd had to restrain himself from lashing out at the idiotic Gryffindors and as a result another hunt through the Forbidden Forest had to be planned so that he could "harmlessly" release his rage. Finally on their third and most recent trek through the forest Haeden managed to ask Selene why it was taking him longer than normal to control his urges and rage.

"I think it's because you've been angry for so long." said Selene, very much deep in thought. "You've bottled up all of your frustrations and anguish over the years that it makes it difficult for you to attain the calm mental state that is required to attain control."

"What do I do then?" asked Haeden desperately, kicking a dead log in half. "I can't keep disappearing from the castle at night; Weasley and Granger are already pestering me with questions."

Selene's face contorted into disgust at the mention of the Muggleborn witch but refrained from voicing out what they could do to the girl to shut her up – now was not the time to excite her brother's need for vengeance, no matter how much the annoying witch deserved it. Instead she said, "You know the solution to that Haeden. We can keep hunting as long as you want, that letter I showed Dumbledore during the opening feast should be enough to cover my nightly disappearances for a year. But as you said, the Gryffindors are getting suspicious and they will not take kindly to one of their Housemates willingly accompanying a Midnight Walker, much less a Slytherin Midnight Walker trekking through the grounds at night."

Selene had gladly explained to him on their first trek through the Forbidden Forest that because of the letter Mother had sent to Dumbledore, explaining to the Headmaster the rare condition she was supposedly suffering from, a magical ailment that weakens her magical core unless she spends a few nights a week bathing in the moonlight, that they would have a very viable reason if ever they were caught out in the grounds at night. And since being a Midnight Walker was a recorded condition, a total of five people in the course of a two centuries, Dumbledore had no reason to doubt their claim and they could just as easily say that as a friend, Harry had decided to accompany the new girl since it was well known at Hogwarts that Harry Potter was noble and loyal to his friends.

Therefore it was with conflicting emotions that Haeden was now walking through the dimly lit corridors of the dungeons, a day after their last chat and hunt thorough the forest. He had, under pain of death (like he could really die, but then that was not really the point, was it?), begrudgingly succumbed to Selene's advice to seek out their father for help. Ever since that first detention he had with the dour man, he had tried his best not to get another one for fear of having to go through another painful conversation he didn't know when he'd ever be ready for, yet here he was, willingly searching out the man. However all thoughts of their upcoming apprehensive meeting was quickly driven out of his mind when all of a sudden he felt a strong tug pulling at his Magyck. The acute pain that was

brought on by the sudden feeling made him reach out for the stone walls in support.

'What the – ' Haeden wondered aloud in his head, trying to shake the dreadful feeling away. He leaned against the stone wall in the hopes of sorting out the brand new feeling that was now slowly leaving his system. It was not his, for that he was sure, because he was neither feeling threatened nor fearful at present. But before he could examine further the sudden rush of impending dread, he heard someone whimpering come from further down the hall. He didn't know what prompted him to run off into Slytherin territory but he had a feeling that what ever he'd just felt would be explained if he followed the fearful cries. As his feet brought him closer towards the source of the sound, a brand new emotion flared just as strongly within him, preventing anything else to permeate his sense. He now found himself possessing of a single thought – he wanted to hurt those who'd dared to inflict harm on a youngling.

No longer aware of the thoughts running through his head, he allowed his senses to guide him through the winding corridors of the dungeons. When he finally reached the corner he knew would bring the source of his protective instincts in sight, he heard two low and muted voices interspaced with the terrified whimpers of a helpless waif.

"We don't want you snakes anywhere here! You're all evil and vile and will one day sell us all Light people to the Dark Lord!" exclaimed the larger of the two boys, a brown haired boy, tormenting what looked like a Slytherin first year.

"So why don't we have our bit of fun with you first before you try to stick your wand at us. That way we get to have the first scream." said the other boy coldly; his wand pointed at the Slytherin's chest while his friend kept their victim pinned on the wall.

"Please... please let me go... please." the Slytherin boy whimpered, pleading hopelessly at the two bullies. But the two older students merely laughed at the pleading boy and, Haeden's vision turned blood red at this, started kicking the boy alternately between the two of them.

Whatever control Haeden might have held at that moment all vanished at the sight of the young boy, his own tormented memories

rising from the depths of his mind in which he'd thrown them in. He burst forth from his hiding place and with the strength only a true Vampyre could ever possess, Haeden single-handedly lifted the first boy off the floor by the front of his robe and had him pinned against the wall, causing the other boy to back away cowardly and for the young Slytherin to slide bonelessly onto the floor.

"What in Merlin's name do you think you're doing?" growled Haeden furiously, pressing the boy heatedly into the wall.

"Let me go!" screamed the brown haired boy, obviously not comprehending the dangerous glint in the Vampyre's eyes. Haeden, ignoring the boy's wince, slammed him into the wall once more and caught a glimpse of the red and gold tie around the bully's neck. The uncontrollable creature in him that he was fighting hard to remain suppressed wanted nothing more than to sink its fangs into the boy's throat – how dare a Gryffindor, the house of the noble and the brave, do such a thing as attack an innocent first year?

A different kind of terrified whimper brought Haeden's eyes towards the brown haired boy's accomplice lying on the floor, fearfully scuttling away – yet another member of the House of Lions! – it seemed that the boy had noticed what his friend had been too thick to notice and took advantage of the his being occupied with pinning his friend to completely run away from the scene. Haeden inwardly sneered at the cowardice portrayed by both the younger Gryffindor boys and allowed the other boy to escape; he already had the other boy's face memorized, the boy would get what was coming for him as soon as he was done with his friend.

"I asked you a question!" barked Haeden, snapping his attention back to the boy he had pinned a few meters above the stone floor. "Why were the two of you attacking a first year?"

"Potter, he's a sodding Slytherin, a future Death Eater." answered the boy, trying to sound mighty, hoping to appeal to a fellow Gryffindor. Haeden's eyes burned, if not even more so at the boy's callous words.

"Say that again?" whispered Haeden in voice that lacked volume but more than made up for in venom. The boy, it seemed, was blessed with a non existent brain and managed to further incur the Vampyre's wrath by opening his mouth again. It was only when eyes



that were once a stunning emerald turned into a deepening pit of darkness, dilated and burning with fury, did the helpless Gryffindor finally realize the danger he was in and fought fruitlessly to free himself from the Vampyre's (not that he knew that Haeden was a one) iron hold.

"Don't hurt me, Potter, please!" pleaded the boy. Haeden couldn't help but sneer at the Gryffindor's pitiful existence.

"Give me one reason why I shouldn't hurt you for attacking an innocent boy?" snarled a very furious Haeden, levelling his wand directly on the boy's face.

"You'll get in trouble for hurting another student!" the pathetic boy blurted out, causing a feral glint to flash in Haeden's eye.

"What gave you the impression that I'll get caught?" The calmness and certainty in Haeden's voice as the words left his mouth made the bullying boy turn as pale as a cooling corpse. "In fact it would be my pleasure to make you feel every single kick you've inflicted on the poor boy and more."

Perhaps it was the smile on his face or the way his dark eyes flashed the various horrible ways he could use to make the boy pay for his actions that produced the warm liquid seeping in between the boy's thighs, Haeden would never know as in that instant the warm liquid's pungent odour sent his senses into overdrive, causing him to nearly drop the boy in pure shock. The lusty creature in him cried out in disgust at the acerbic scent and ran behind his mental shields in the hopes of escaping the horrible stench.

Haeden, feeling his rage lessening but not completely assuaged, growled at the mess the boy had made and flung him away from his person, making sure to moderate the amount of strength he applied on the boy. The whimpering boy landed a good few meters away, the shock of the entire exchange keeping him rooted right where he was, watching fearfully as Haeden stood in an intimidating stance. Despite the distance between them, Haeden made sure that his words would be heard and remembered by the idiotic boy.

"I'm warning you," he intoned, his voice low but reverberated eerily through the stone corridor. "If I ever see you tormenting anyone else within or beyond these walls, I will personally make sure that all of

your nightmares pale in comparison to what I will do to you once I find you. And mark my words, I will hear about you because there will be nowhere on this retched planet you can hide from me. That applies to your cowardly friend as well, do I make myself clear?"

The boy nodded his head vigorously, seemingly too afraid to make anything louder than his ragged breathing.

"Good! Now get out of my sight you disgusting lump of flesh and bone! You're mother should have drowned you at birth, would have given us all a lot less trouble! Get out of here!" The boy needed no prompting after that and scampered away like a beaten dog with its tail in between its legs.

Haeden waited until the sound of scampering legs could no longer be heard, feeling a horrible headache coming along, before turning towards the Slytherin victim of the two Gryffindor boys. The boy was shivering and huddled in the corner but what Haeden found surprising was that the boy was looking at him calmly straight in the eyes. Physically he was battered, but there was something in the boy's gaze that told Haeden that had another story to tell. Furthermore, it shocked him to recognize the boy as the tiny terrified looking boy he'd taken an interest in during the sorting.

"Warren McArthur, isn't it?" queried Haeden softly, recalling the name the Deputy Headmistress had called out from her list.

"Yes," replied the boy steadily whereas his boy continued to shake uncontrollably."

Haeden approached the confusing boy and felt the overwhelming desire to protect swell in him once more. "Hi, my name's Hae-Harry Potter. Can you tell me how you ended up pinned by those two, Warren?"

The boy, Warren, slowly unfurled himself from the protective position he'd held himself throughout Haeden's confrontation of his assailants and stared levelly at the green eyes before him. "I was supposed to meet someone here but then those two suddenly came up on me and they just started hounding me questions, telling me that I don't belong here... I do belong here, don't I?"

The sudden tremble in the boy's steady voice coupled with the boy's show of insecurity caught Haeden completely off guard and he suddenly found himself frustrated for ever letting the two bullies off with nothing but a damaged pride and ego. "Don't listen to those boys!" he said firmly, holding out his hand to help the boy to his feet. "Anyone who can do magic has a place here at Hogwarts. And if you let her, Hogwarts can even be your home away from home, so don't ever listen to anyone who says you don't have the right to be here, because you do!"

Warren took hold of the proffered hand and mumbled begrudgingly under his breath, "Not if you're a freak like me..."

"What did you say?" demanded Haeden despite his ears having heard everything the boy had said as if they were said directly over his ears and turned his full gaze on the puzzling boy.

"I didn't say anything!" said the boy in a tone that was tad too defensive for Haeden's liking, pulling his hand back towards his person. But before Haeden would ask another question, a dishevelled looking Draco Malfoy emerged from the corner.

"There you are Warren!" cried Malfoy in what sounded as relief and running straight for the boy, completely oblivious to the presence of another student. "I've been looking for you everywhere! You were supposed to wait for me outside the Potions classroom."

"I got caught by two Gryffindors, Dray." replied the boy, causing Malfoy to turning scrutinizing eyes at the petite first year.

"Did they hurt you? I swear if they hurt you I will make their life miserable. And didn't we tell you to stay away from Gryffindors?" Haeden had to fight to keep the surprise off of his face but he was losing badly as never in the five years he'd known the Slytherin Prince had he seen this side of the boy – worrying over someone other than himself.

"Dray, I'm fine. Harry here helped me out." The moment his name came out of Warren's mouth, steely grey eyes turned to register his presence for the first time.

"Malfoy," Haden intoned neutrally, inclining his head towards his Slytherin contemporary.

"Potter." Malfoy jerked his head in acknowledgement and once again the Vampyre noted the absence of the Slytherin's usual sneer. In fact the boy seemed pleased to see him – but this was Draco Malfoy, why would he be pleased to see Harry Potter? And if Malfoy's earlier show of worry over another human being shocked him, the boy's next gesture left him gaping shamefully.

Malfoy stuck out his hand, lacking a bit of his usual Pureblood superiority, and said something Haeden would never have believed could come out of the Slytherin's mouth. "Thank you, Potter, for helping out Warren. You have mine and our Head of House's gratitude."

As soon as the fact that he was gaping openly at Malfoy registered to his numbed out brain, Haeden immediately clamped his mouth shut and rigidly shook the proffered hand. "Er... you're... you're welcome, Malfoy."

The sleek haired blonde retracted his out stretched hand, not looking a bit disgusted at having come into contact with a Gryffindor and offered a restrained smile before turning away to scrutinize the young boy once more. Haeden would have collapsed there and then if he'd been treated with an actual sincere smile by Malfoy, at least now he knew that the Malfoy he knew and hated was still somewhere beneath this façade the Slytherin Prince was allowing him to see – his life was not yet turning on its head, for which he was thankful. A small gasps escaped from Warren's mouth but surprisingly Haeden didn't catch a single word they'd said. After awhile Malfoy turned back to face the Gryffindor, his hand held protective over Warren's shoulder.

"Again, Potter, thank you. We will be going now." said Malfoy once more, his face an unreadable mask. The protective instincts in Haeden growled at how close the older Slytherin was to the younger boy but his urge to charge at the blonde were restrained due to the simple fact that Malfoy seem to want nothing more than protect the boy as well.

"See you around Harry!" waved Warren cheerily, a slight awe distinguishable from his tone and it was the most animated the Vampyre had seen the boy tonight.

"You too Warren, Malfoy." Haeden cocked his head at the two Slytherins and watched as the pair walked away, moving deeper into the bowels of Slytherin territory.

Haeden stood on the spot long after the pair of Slytherins left his line of sight, his mind still trying to process this latest confrontation of his with the Malfoy Heir. Truth be told, this wasn't the first time he'd encountered the brand new Malfoy, and if memory served him right, he'd briefly encountered the boy during his first detention with the Potions Master. But tonight was the first time he'd actually got a face full of that change he'd briefly got a taste of those many nights ago. He didn't know what to make of this change in attitude in Malfoy, but if it made his life a lot less troublesome than it already was, then he would welcome the change, it wasn't as if he would suddenly become chummy friends with the Slytherin now that he was a little bit amiable towards him. No definitely not, there were certain aspects of his former life he would like to keep intact, and that was the constancy that Malfoy's rivalry had over him.

All thoughts of seeking out the Potions Master driven out of his mind, Haeden made his long trek back up to the Gryffindor Tower.

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The next morning Haeden went down to the Great Hall and was instantly assailed with an intense feeling of grief and sadness. From his position by the doors of the Great Hall, he was just about to search the throngs of students to determine where the strong emotions were coming from when the familiar dull staccato sound of someone wearing short heeled shoes approaching him reached his ears.

"Where were you last night, Harry?" asked the person; his sensitive ears catching the underlying snappishness of her voice.

Haeden reluctantly turned around to meet his interrogator and said in his most casual voice, "Good morning to you too, Hermione."

"Don't play with me Harry." said Hermione, arms crossed. "You were missing from the common room again last night and didn't come back until way past midnight."

"Who died and made you my keeper, Hermione?" Haeden couldn't help but crying incredulously at the witch.

"No one died, Harry. I'm your friend and I'm only asking because I care about your well-being. Times are dangerous now and we can't ever let our guard down – you can't ever let your guard down." said Hermione, matching the irritation in Haeden's voice.

"Well that's just it Hermione, I'm not a little kid you have to keep guard of. I can look after myself, I've been doing it long before you ever came along!" snapped Haeden, his patience for his friend slowly reaching its limit.

Hermione backed off a bit at the power radiating off of Harry and said in a smaller, much more concerned voice, "What's the matter Harry? Why are you acting as if you don't want your friends anymore?"

As soon as her words sank in, Haeden berated himself mentally for losing his control at her. Despite her apparent lack of trust in him and her audacity to pen him a scathing letter during the summer and not apologize and explain herself as soon as she saw him, he still saw her as a valuable source to have and his charades were bound to be discovered if he continued to take out all of his frustrations on her. Haeden closed his eyes and exhaled slowly and deeply through his nose a couple of times, he was slowly learning to tolerate the human scent enough not to attack them at every sniff of his nose, before opening his eyes once more to face a worried looking Hermione Granger.

"Look Hermione," he began slowly and mechanically. "I'm sorry I snapped at you. But could you just please lay off of where I go to every night? I swear I'm not doing anything illegal or dangerous."

Hermione eyed him shrewdly, seemingly not believing a word he'd just said. Cutting off the space between them, she asked in barely veiled accusation, his Vampyric senses not failing to notice the changes in the tone of her voice. "You were out with Selene again, weren't you?"

"For the love of Merlin, Hermione." exclaimed Haeden, barely keeping his control in check. "Must you ask me that every time I fail to show up at the common room at your convenience?" Why did he

ever try to pacify her when she was constantly out to badger him with her insistent questioning was beyond him. Lately few of his answers were ever good enough for her.

"Well you can't deny that you've been spending a lot of time with her, mostly late at night." stated Hermione, probably hoping to get a affirmation from him

"It's Tuesday and I haven't talked to her once since Friday's Potions class." said Haeden, which was partially true since no talking whatsoever was done during their last trek through the forest a day later.

"That's good." Stated Hermione, not bothering to hide how pleased she was of the situation. "She is an unknown influence to us Harry, its best if you limit your contact with her."

Haeden closed his eyes and lightly shook his head in the negative. "Whatever you say, Hermione." He was getting extremely weary of her unfounded hate over Selene and her persistence to have him stay away from the older girl since as far as he knew Selene had never done anything against her.

"Wait Harry, where are you going? Breakfast is this way." asked Hermione as soon as she saw him heading away from the direction of the Great Hall.

"I'm not really hungry, Hermione. I'll just go back to the Tower and get ready for class." said Haeden.

"Alright, but could you wait for Ron and I so that we could all head for our class together?" asked Hermione, a cheery smile whipping away her earlier officiousness.

"Sure thing Hermione," replied Haeden, knowing he would never be able to get out of it even if he tried.

"Great! See you later then." Haeden had never been so pleased as to see the doors of the Great Hall close after her.

For the next two days Haeden had to endure the company of Ron and Hermione who insisted that they do everything together. 'Like when we were first years.' piped an enthused Ron. Though for the

life of him, Haeden could not recall a time when Ron had willingly gone to the Library to study with him. Also any plans he'd had to approach Selene were thwarted by either of them. And to add to his present irritation, the strong feelings of sadness he'd felt a few days ago had yet to diminish and because he was under the constant watch of his 'friends' he could not go and research about it without first explaining to the two how he was able to feel such an extreme emotion in the first place.

It was presently dinner time and Ron and Hermione had positioned themselves on either side and as always, were arguing insistently. Haeden was extremely proud of the fact that he'd yet to lose his temper around them, despite of him wanting nothing to do otherwise.

"I'm telling you Mione, me and Seamus were only showing the firsties a few harmless tricks." Haeden was barely able to cover his goblet as spittle exploded from Ron as he cried out his defence.

"You're calling setting off live fireworks inside the Common Room harmless?" exclaimed Hermione in disbelief.

"They were Heatless Filibuster's Fireworks!" utter Ron defensively.

"Heatless or not, Ronald, they were still fireworks and could have endangered everyone in the common room." replied Hermione heatedly.

"Could not!" came the red head's childish comeback. There was a second before Hermione replied that Haeden thought she would utter the usual response to such a juvenile argument but was instead treated to a rare display of violence from the girl. Hermione reached out behind him and struck the unsuspecting Weasley at the back of the head.

"Ouch!" cried Ron, rubbing his sore head. "What was that for Hermione?"

"That was for being immature and irresponsible! How many times must I remind you that you are a Prefect?" said Hermione. "Did you really think that the Gryffindor Tower was merely for students to live in during the school year? The Tower contains valuable artefacts, that if damaged would be near impossible to replace. What if your



harmless trick had landed on a thousand year old painting? What would you have then?"

Ron was left gaping like a mindless fish for a few moments before coming up with a reasonable answer to Hermione's rant. "Repair it with magic of course!"

"Argh..." growled Hermione annoyance. "Weren't you paying attention in class when Professor Flitwick told us that the older a certain magical artefact is, the more resistant it is to magic? Therefore simply casting a Reparo on it will not repair any of the damages you could otherwise have inflicted on a thousand year old painting!"

Haeden had just about enough of their bickering and was about to tell the so when a barn owl dropped a nondescript envelope on top of Hermione's plate. For a moment all three of them turned to look at the letter – no mail was ever delivered during dinner – and just as he was about to reach out to open it, Hermione snatched the letter away.

"Who's it from?" asked Haeden.

"Er... it seems like the Head Boy wants a word with Ron and I." replied Hermione, gripping the letter rightly in her hands after having read it.

"I've never seen either Head Boy or Head Girl ever sending missives to their Prefects by owl before." stated Haeden innocently, eyeing the crumpled up parchment. "They usually just approach them."

"I'm pretty sure it's been done before," said Hermione hastily, prompting Haeden to raise his brow. "Well... Ron and I better go."

Hermione rose from the Gryffindor table and pulled Ron up from his seat. "Come on Ron, the Head Boy wants to speak to us. You will be waiting in the common room when we return, won't you Harry?" she turned towards him before leaving the Great Hall.

"Yes, Hermione." said Haeden, resigned.

"Great, see you later, Harry." The Vampyre watched as the Muggleborn witch dragged Weasley across the Great Hall, all the while mumbling how he had yet to finish his chicken.

As soon as the pair had left the Great Hall, Haeden heaved a great sigh of relief. He was beginning to wonder if they were ever going to leave him alone. Knowing that he had only a couple of hours of freedom before the two returned and stuck to him like glue once more, he quickly swallowed the bit of dry meat he had been trying to eat and ran off in search of a particular grey eyed Clandestine. In his haste to leave the Gryffindor Table he failed to notice a pair of contemplating brown eyes directed towards him.

A/N: Short, I know. But at least I showed you how life is at Hogwarts for our dear young Vampyre. And who wants to strangle Granger? (raises hand and jumps up and down). Dumbledore's manipulations will further reveal itself in the coming chapters and very soon our dear Vampyre will receive some enlightenment on certain people around him.

Read and review.

'Til next post.

dan4eva

## Chapter 25 Fathers

The Dark Lord was pacing angrily down the hollowed halls of his headquarters. He had just received word from one of his Death Eaters that yet another audience before the Council had been denied him. He of course had Crucioed the unfortunate man to the brink of insanity and had moved on to pacing the length of his study in Riddle Manor. He had for a few months now, with the aid of the Vampyre Queen, tried to approach the Shadow Council to have them grant him access to a bit more Magyckal resources and each and every time he was denied.

He of course knew the reasoning behind their denial but it did not stand to mean that he agreed with their reasoning. He'd spent years studying the Magyck he'd inherited from his mother's side of the family and had read the few books he'd managed to copy from the Royal Courts about the subject. He understood each and every single rule that was attached to the very existence of their Magyck and knew of the consequences that came with over indulging oneself with Magyck, and yet they still refuse him of the power! He was Lord Voldemort for Salazar sake, successor of the great Dark Lord Grindewald and a descendant of Slytherin himself – he was no ordinary wizard who could easily succumb to the maddening powers of Magyck.

He would prove to those ancient Council members that he was more than capable of wielding a bit more of the untamed Magyck and lead them all to victory. He would show to them that he was more than just a Halfling. He would show them!

Lord Voldemort's musings and pacing were disrupted by the sudden appearance of a young lady, hooded and cloaked in black material, leaning by the doorway.

"I never knew you to pace," said the young lady in Rumnic, her tone amused.

"I am not pacing!" snapped the Dark Lord irritably in English.

Beneath her hood the young lady quirked her brow upwards and surveyed her Lord with unveiled amusement. "Could have fooled me, My Lord."

Lord Voldemort glared at the unrestrained mirth in the newcomer's voice and said, "What brings you here, Airu? Did I not specifically tell you to remain in the castle unless I require your assistance?"

"Can't an Airu come and seek her Lord whenever she pleases?" replied the Airu, unfazed by the Dark Lord's piercing look and moved away from the doorway to walk towards the still fuming man.

It was now the Dark Lord's turn to raise a quizzical eyebrow at the approaching Airu. "Had I chosen a different Airu, I would have believed that statement. But alas I chose you, so please forgive me if I choose not to believe a word you've just said."

"Fair enough, My Lord." The Airu bowed respectfully at the Dark Lord before placing herself comfortably on the nearest armchair and lowered her hood, revealing hair the colour of blood that was braided all the way down to her waist.

"Again, I ask, what brings you here, my Airu? Should you not be at the Old Man's castle?" asked Voldemort absentmindedly, continuing with his pacing.

"He is the reason why I am here, My Lord." said the Airu solemnly from her position down by the armchair. "Another Clandestine has fallen victim to Dumbledore's Trackers."

"What?" cried the Dark Lord indignantly, stopping at once and his red eyes turned swiftly towards his Airu. "Why was I not told of this?"

The Airu visibly flinched at the harsh tones of the Dark Lord, she knew that when completely angered even she was not immune to the Dark Lord's ire. "Forgive me, My Lord. But Dumbledore has strengthened the wards around the castle; I have only managed to bypass all of his wards today. Plus it was only a few days ago that the Guardians informed us that a noble Vampyre failed to show up when the Gates were scheduled to grant him sanctuary into the Clandestine Plane. According to investigations, the Vampyre had been trying to locate Dumbledore's source when the Trackers found him. No one has seen him since then." explained the girl.

The Dark Lord, who by now had ceased all of his pacing, was seated behind his large desk deep in thought. Now more than ever

he wanted the Council to grant him autonomy over the use of wild Magyck. They needed to have control of the Ministry if they wanted to stop Dumbledore. Looking up from his desk he saw his Aiuri staring at him anxiously, he would overlook her mistake for now; there were more pressing matter to attend to.

"Tell me, have they identified which one of the Vampyre Noblessss wassss captured?" his distinct hissing becoming more apparent now that he was slowly going under pressure.

"Yes, My Lord." replied the Airu tentatively, not wanting to receive the Dark Lord's ire, she could feel his anger pouring out in waves around her. "It's the Head of the Perseus Clan. His only son is currently under the protection of the Dark Prince."

Voldemort bolted upward from his seat and began his insistent pacing once more, swearing vehemently at the mention of the name. The Perseus Clan was one of the most prominent Vampyre Clans within the Plane. They were not related to the Vampyric clans of the Royal Court, but they were still high up the nobility ladder that the capture of their Master would severely impact everyone within the sanctuary of the Clandestine Plane – no person of nobility had ever been captured since the brutal slaying of King Slavarin.

He could just picture the Queen now, upon receiving this news, marching up and down the halls of the Royal Court, barking orders to find the captive Head of the Perseus Clan and all the while cursing the very existence of Albus Dumbledore – a slight shudder ran down his spine. He would never admit to a soul that the Vampyre Queen often left him feeling glad that he had allied himself with her family. The slowly aging sage, not that you could really tell with Vampyres, could cut out the heart of even the darkest Dark Lord if those she held dear were threatened.

Deciding on a course of action, the Dark Lord turned once more to the young lady seated before him and said heatedly, "We will have to double our forces. It has never been more important that we find Dumbledore's damn source of Magyck. By rights that man should not even be able to wield Magyck! His ancestors were the reason are kind is where it is right now! We have to find where he is keeping all the captive Clandestines and how he is able to use Magyck!"

"Yes, My Lord." said the Airu, preparing herself for a long night of delegating her Lord's orders to his many Death Eaters.

"And I want you to inform Severus that I wish to speak to his son as soon as possible, I require his assistance!"

The Airu turned surprised eyes at this. "But My Lord, you know of the boy's opinion of you. Furthermore he is proving stubborn to the Dark Prince's attempts at reconciliation. It will not be easy to have him agree to talk to you much less meet you in person."

"He has been made aware, has he not?" demanded the Dark Lord.

"To the best of my knowledge, yes, My Lord." replied the girl.

"Then I shall speak with him at the soonest possible time!" cried Lord Voldemort.

The Airu stared uneasily at her Lord before rising from her seat and tentatively approached the brooding Dark Lord. "If I may be so bold, My Lord, is it not possible to take control of the Ministry without attempting to wield wild Magyck? It is far too dangerous and I fear for My Lord's safety."

"There is no other way, child." replied the Dark Lord, sternly. "Dumbledore will only fall once the Ministry, along with his supporters, falls. And the only way to take over the Ministry is to attack it at full force; and the only way to do that is for me to wield a bit more Magyck. There is no other way around it! I need the Sedaire to alter the Council's decision. I would not force myself on the boy if I were still allowed to pass through the Gates and into the Plane."

"I only worry for you, My Lord." stated the Airu, her voice laced with concern.

In a rare show of human emotions, the Dark Lord breached the gap between him and his Airu and placed his hand gently atop the girl's shoulder, giving it a comforting squeeze, well as comforting as a Dark Lord could show. "There is nothing to fear child. I am more than capable of controlling a bit more wild Magyck in me. When I have taken control over the Ministry, the war's end shall be on the horizon, and you and I will finally be able to go back home."

"I would love that." said the youth softly, smiling at the man who had mentored her for years.

"The hour is getting late," said the Dark Lord, relieving his hand from the girl's shoulder. "Return to the castle as soon as you're done with your tasks and make sure the old man remains oblivious."

"Yes, My Lord," the Airu took the Dark Lord's words as her dismissal and pulled up her hood over her face once more before bowing at the Dark Lord.

"Good luck, child."

"You too, Father." And with that the Airu swept out of the room, leaving the Dark Lord to his pacing.

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Somewhere in the castle the clock tower struck ten, signalling that he was now out pass curfew.

Haeden was pissed. He'd spent the entire week in the company of Ron and Hermione, the longest he'd done so far, and he wanted nothing more than to tear his hair out in irritation. If the pair was not pulling at him to remain under their watchful eye, they would be bickering non stop and it was fast driving him over the edge. Their scrutiny of his every action was suffocating, it was as if they expected a Death Eater to suddenly jump out from behind one of the castle's many suits of armour and attack him. However he was no fool, he knew they were trying to keep him away from certain people.

All week long he'd tried in vain to approach Selene, for he knew something of importance had occurred and he needed to know what he could do to help. It also didn't help his curiosity that every time he turned to look at the Potions Master he could feel waves upon waves of anger leeching out of the man. He was actually quite surprised that the Headmaster could not feel the anger that was undoubtedly directed at him considering that the dour man was sitting right next to him at every meal.

He was completely at his wits ends when it came to his two Gryffindor friends, they were restricting his freedom and when they

disappear to Merlin knows where for a supposed meeting with either the Head Boy or Head Girl, they expect him to stay put and wait out for them while he couldn't even step a meter away from them without explaining where he was planning to head. His situation was enough to drive even the most disciplined Vampyre over the wall and onto their tempting necks! Perhaps the only thing that made his situation beneficial was the fact that throughout the entire experience his control was slowly but surely getting to the point of perfection – well it had to be if he wanted to remain under the Old Man's radar!

As the clock tower struck its tenth and final chime Haeden frowned, he was certain that a minor Spanish Inquisition was waiting to be thrown at him as soon as he set foot into the portrait hole. After dinner he'd wisely ditched Ron and Hermione whilst the two were in the midst of yet another petty argument to search out for the only female Vampyre in the castle. For two hours he scoured the castle for her but it was like she only showed herself whenever he was not looking for her or least expected her to appear. He'd definitely seen her during dinner, sitting beside a sullen looking Warren McArthur. But after that he'd seen neither head nor hind of the girl. In more than one occasion he'd thought of seeking out the Head of Slytherin instead but in every occasion his nerves would fail him and he would be back to planting a fake smile on his face as he endured yet another one of Ron's nonstop Quidditch chatter.

He'd finally reached the Gryffindor Common Room after having given up his search for Selene when to his surprise he found neither Ron nor Hermione waiting for him behind the portrait hole.

'Could they possibly have been called to another meeting?' he thought, when a quick scan of the common room found no Hermione hiding behind a thick tome or Ron snoozing over an unfinished assignment. Haeden smiled a smile only a man given a reprieve from death roll could ever give and trudged up towards the boy's dormitory, still not believing his luck. Perhaps if he went to bed early he'd be able to dodge the Ron and Hermione bullet until late tomorrow morning. That was definitely worth smiling about!

He was still grinning over his sudden luck by the time his hand made to turn the handle to the boys' dormitory and was just about to flop lazily on his bed when he found that two people were already occupying it.



"Ron! Hermione!" he exclaimed in shock, every ecstatic feeling he'd worked evaporating at an exponential rate.

The said pair of Gryffindors turned in unison at him and he was graced with identical looks of disapproval. "Where have you been, Harry?" asked Hermione, her voice stern.

"I said I was going for a walk down by the lake." Haeden said the first thing he could think of, not liking how they cornering him like this.

"No you didn't." said Ron.

"Well perhaps if you two had ceased fighting for even just a minute to listen to me during dinner you would have heard me." replied Haeden with a sneer; he'd been waiting a long time to have that thrown at their faces.

Ron and Hermione had the good graces to blush at his comment and he couldn't help but preen on the inside. "Well, that's still not a good enough reason to just wander off in the middle of the night." said Hermione in a matter-of-fact tone once the redness in her cheeks had faded.

Haeden could hardly believe the girl and immediately snapped at her. "So I have to wait until the two of you run out of petty arguments to volley at each other before I receive the verdict of whether I can go somewhere, like some bloody five year old?"

"I did not say that, Harry." cried Hermione. "You could have stopped us instead of running off without our knowledge. You had us worrying, Harry."

'More like worried I may be talking to undesirable people.' He thought scornfully but out loud he said, "Fat lot of good that would do! You two argue as if your life force depended on it. I'd rather save my breath!"

"There's no need to take that tone with 'Mione, mate." growled Ron, bolting out of the bed. "We're only looking out for you. For all we know that Slytherin girl could have been luring you to You-Know-Who!"

Here we go again... "Why is it that you two despise Selene so much? She's done nothing wrong to the both of you yet all you do is throw unfounded accusations at her!"

"Unfounded accusations?" cried Hermione in mild hysteria. "Harry, can't you see she's a bad influence on you?"

"A bad influence?" parroted Haeden in disbelief, mentally laughing his head off.

"Yes, Harry!" exclaimed Hermione, thinking that she'd finally gotten through him. "You use to tell us everything. But now, now it feels like we don't even know you. You disappear all the time –"

"I've not been able to make a move this entire week without either of you're consent!" Haeden couldn't help but exclaim in anger.

"– so you can't fault us in becoming wary of her." she went on, ignoring the feral look on Haeden's face. "And we have proof, Harry; we have proof that she's a Dark witch."

Haeden stiffened, his eyes widening in fear. Had they finally realized who he truly was? He scanned the circular dormitory hoping to find a clue to what they were talking about. It was then that he caught sight of his trunk – he was positively sure he had not removed any of the books that lay on top of it.

"What proof?" asked Haeden, his mind running through many things they could have found out about him.

Ron and Hermione exchanged looks and Haeden began to feel fear clawing at him from the inside. "Harry we know that you're a good person, that's why when we found this we immediately knew that that Freighter girl is somehow influencing you in the ways of the Dark." She then pulled out a familiar looking wooden box from within her robes.

Haeden took one look at the box in her hand and their expectant faces and knew that if he didn't fix this fast, he might very find himself imprisoned once more in his own head. Taking deliberate steps forward, he lunged for the box in Hermione's lax hand and growled at them, "How dare you break into my trunk! And you call yourselves my friends! You're no better than pathetic hypocrites."

"Harry please," intoned Hermione, reaching out to him. "You've got to stop this, or else we'll go to Dumbledore. We're only doing what's best for you and we've been very understanding considering your recent loss, Harry, but if you don't end this madness soon, we'll be forced to tell on you."

"Oh, so I should be grateful then that you've not told on me yet?" said Haeden derisively, fearing deep inside of the ramifications if Dumbledore knew what he currently possessed. "That's just plain twisted, and you know it!"

"Can you really blame us, mate?" said Ron. "After meeting Freighter you've been very distant. Half the time we have no idea where you are or what you are doing, and now we find this dark object hidden in your trunk. It's like she's turned you into a different person."

"It's called growing up, Ronald! Something you seem to be failing at." snapped Haeden. Ron's face flared brightly and was about to do something stupid as to lunge at a fuming Vampyre when a hand stalled his movements.

"But what of that Hand?" Hermione gestured at the box held protectively in his arm, her hold on red-faced Weasley preventing her from doing anything else. "You can't expect us to believe that growing up suddenly made you want to buy such an evil thing. It's all her doing, Harry! Why can't you see?"

By this time the Muggleborn witch had become desperate, tears flowing freely down her face, and she released Weasley to walk up towards Haeden's personal space to place her hand on his arm. "We are your friends, Harry, not some random Dark witch! You're heading towards a path that will destroy you."

Haeden pushed off the hysterical girl and nearly growled at her. "If you two persist in doing this, I may just become what you two think I have become!" His tone was no louder than a whisper but it carried a detached coldness that sent shivers down both Ron and Hermione's spine.

"Please Harry, why won't you listen..." pleaded Hermione, causing Haeden to sneer at her pathetic display. "This is what got Sirius killed in the first place – because you refused to listen!"

Haeden's stance stiffened at her words. "Because there is nothing worth listening to." said Haeden coolly. "Now if you'll just excuse me, I find your presence revolting at the moment." His insides were burning with anger and if he didn't get out of their presence soon, there was a possibility he could explode at them. How dare she throw Sirius' death at him! He also needed to contact Snape; they now had two extremely suspicious Gryffindors at his tail, and something had to be done about it.

He was just about to step out off the dormitory when the words that would forever change his opinion towards his 'friends' spilled out of Ron's mouth. That was when he'd finally snapped.

"Then you leave us with no choice, mate. Dumbledore will have to know that the saviour of the Wizarding World is now going to be its downfall."

Haeden's eyes darkened and his grip on the box tightened, his free arm slowly unclasping the lid and felt the cold feel of the dead hand. "Funny you should mention that Weasley, when in fact it is actually your kind who caused the downfall of the Wizarding World."

"What are you talking about!" demanded the hot-headed Gryffindor.

"Oh, nothing that you need to worry about, Weasley." drawled Haeden nonchalantly, turning around to face the two who had now completely betrayed him. He had given them the benefit of the doubt after their accusatory letters this summer and now they'd proven that he'd merely wasted his time on them. They would forever be blinded by Dumbledore's false words and grandfatherly demeanour.

Ron and Hermione paled at the sight of their friend carelessly stroking the diseased hand. "What are you doing?" bellowed Ron.

Haeden smiled sadistically at the pair, causing them both to stagger backwards in fear, and plucked out the Hand of Bereavement from its resting place. "Fear not, Ron, it won't hurt... much." The two terrified Gryffindors quickly backed away as he approached them; the Hand perched on his shoulder in a sick parody of a loyal pet.

"Don't do this, Harry! Come with us to Dumbledore and he'll help you sort this out. We'll get Freightner expelled and you'll be back to normal." Granger pleaded at him.

"Dumbledore can't sort me out." whispered Haeden, a tad crazed. "I happen to like what I am." Hermione shrieked while Ron looked as if all the blood had been drained off him; and as if the witch's scream had been a cue, the Hand leapt from its perch on his shoulder and landed squarely on Weasley's horrified face. Immediately the grotesque Hand pulled up a particularly sharp nail and dug it deep into the boy's flesh, eliciting a painful scream from the unfortunate boy.

As the Hand proceeded to make a deep gash on the Gryffindor's face, Haeden watched in fascination as the Hand's grip only tightened as the another boy struggled to remove it from his face.

"Make it stop Harry! Make it stop!" cried Hermione hysterically, unable to do anything but watch as her friend had his face slowly and painfully ripped from his body. However Haeden chose to ignore her pleas and cries of horror and merely sneered at her as she lost the contents of her stomach on the floor.

Weasley's screams continued to permeate the circular room, but no matter how loud his screams were, no one would be able to hear him. Before launching his Hand on his former friends, Haeden had cast a powerful silencing charm around the whole dormitory, that way he could release his pent up frustrations at them without being disturbed.

Soon Weasley's face had a bleeding gash that ran from his temple all the way to his neck, his screams not having lessened throughout the ordeal. Granger on the other hand had once again flung herself on Haeden and demanded that he stop at once.

But just as Haeden was just about to order the Hand to maim the pathetic witch before him, the door to the boys' dormitory swung open, revealing two frantic girls. There were no words to express his surprise at finding Ginny, much less an angry one, in the company of Selene who he could swear he'd never seen as angry as he was seeing her now. Worst of all, it seemed like both their anger was directed towards him.

"What do you think you're doing?" Selene called out strongly, looking between the two Gryffindors and Hand that now laid poise on the floor.

"Look what you've done to my friend, YOU BITCH!" Granger raged at the Slytherin and when she noticed that her friend's sister was in the same company, she added, "Ginny, you stay away from her!"

"I suggest you learn to shut your mouth for once, Granger! It would do your health a great deal." Ginny sneered, shocking not only Granger but Haeden as well. Then the red haired Gryffindor raised her hand, causing a red light to race towards Granger and her brother, and as soon as the light made contact with its targets, Weasley and Granger's expressions turned blank before ungraciously collapsing on the floor. A satisfied smirk quickly graced her otherwise gentle face.

Haeden merely stared at his now unconscious friends, all too aware of who had just stunned her own brother.

Selene chose to ignore just what had transpired before her and immediately crossed the room to deliver a firm backhand to the younger Vampyre. "Have you completely gone mad?" she cried harshly at the now dazed Vampyre.

Haeden brought up a hand at his slowly reddening cheek and blinked owlishly at the infuriated Vampyre. "W-what was that for?" he demanded as soon as he'd gotten his bearings.

"For acting completely out of control!" snapped Selene angrily, you could literally feel her anger radiating off of her. "If the Airu had not informed me of the sudden surge of Magyck up here, it would be the Headmaster charging up here now and happening upon a murder scene!"

"I was merely showing them a lesson!" defended Haeden. "They were threatening to tell on me and I couldn't have that."

"They wouldn't have been compelled to report to Dumbledore had you played your part properly and why in the seven levels of Hell do you keep that Hand of yours out in the open?" Selene's well hidden fangs had released themselves in her anger and were now protruding from her mouth for all to see. "What you have now done

is far worse than what could have happened if those two merely reported of your odd behaviours. Do you plan for Dumbledore to descend upon us? Do you?"

Haeden stared at the unconscious forms of Hermione Granger and Ronald Weasley, taking note of the profusely bleeding gash that ran nearly the entire half of the Weasley's face. After hearing Selene's tirade he was looking to see if he could feel within him an ounce of regret at having done what he did to the two Gryffindors. But then memories of accusations and threats he'd endured in their company rose to the fore of his mind and any signs of growing regret were extinguished. They rightly deserved what he'd done; in fact what he did was merely a fragment of what he could feel he was now capable of doing. So deep was he in his resentment of his once-friends that he failed to see Selene and Ginny exchanging apprehensive looks.

When Haeden failed to reply, Selene released a growl of frustration before pulling the troubled Vampyre away from the scene of his mangled Housemates. "That is it!" exclaimed the female Vampyre, "I've had it with you and your 'damn the whole world' attitude, this stops now. Come with me!"

The firm grip on his hand caused Haeden to snap out of his thoughts and to lash out indignantly at the older Vampyre. "Where are you taking me?" he demanded.

"I'm taking you to Father! I can't handle this; this is too much for me. You seem to be under the false assumption that Dumbledore is oblivious to our existence. But let me tell you now Haeden that one false move will bring his forces down on not only you but the rest of our people! You have to get this anger of yours under control Haeden, before you ruin everything!" said Selene, taking a firm grip of the struggling youths arm.

Then before making her way out of the dormitory, with a reluctant Haeden in tow, Selene turned to look at Ginny. "Airu, tou hiyea gree iu diye faihe! Fix this before the wards fall!"

"Shay, Selene." nodded Ginny, walking towards the two fallen Gryffindors as the doors to the dormitory shut close behind the two Vampyres.

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Haeden wanted to pull Selene back into the common room as they descended the stairs into the common room. How was he to explain that a Slytherin had entered their domain and was now dragging him out to see the Potions Master? And as if his thoughts broadcasted themselves to Selene, the female Vampyre halted abruptly causing him to run smack onto her back.

"They can't see us, remember" she said.

Despite his anger Haeden found himself asking, "I know you can choose not to be seen but how's it possible that they can't see me when we're standing in the middle of the common room?"

"The Airu has erected wards to keep the others from noticing us, but the longer we put up wards to shield our presence, the easier it is for Dumbledore to detect us." explained Selene.

"You mean Ginny?" said Haeden.

"Yes!" snapped Selene. "Now will I have to persist on dragging you like a child or will you follow me?"

"I'll follow." Haeden replied begrudgingly.

"Good!" stated Selene, walking quickly out of the portrait hole. "Come on, the wards won't hold up much longer!"

Haeden made to equal Selene's long strides and was soon walking alongside her, an uncomfortable silencing trailing them as they made their way down into the dungeons. Since it was after curfew they met no one, not even Mrs. Norris on their way down and soon Selene had led him outside the Potion Master's office.

"Get in." intoned Selene, gesturing towards the closed door with an exceptionally hard expression.

"Aren't you going to follow me?" asked Haeden, feeling nervous and frightened for the first since he'd tortured Granger and Weasley.

"No. I have informed Father of what you've done and it's about time you two had a talk." said Selene, unrelenting.



"Er...Alright I feel bad about what I did to Granger and Weasley, okay. I..." began Haeden only to be cut off by Selene's brusque laughter.

"You and I both know that you don't feel bad about what you did, so why don't you just go inside and get this over with before Dumbledore starts to notice things." said Selene, pulling down the door handle and pushing him roughly towards the darkness.

"I'll return in a few hours to take you back to your common room." Haeden heard Selene say before the heavy dungeon door closed behind him, leaving him in complete darkness.

Much quicker than what he'd wanted his eyes began to adjust to the darkness around him and soon he was seeing the room as if someone had lit it up with a burning torch. Rooted on the spot, he could count the number of times he'd been in the Potion Master's office in one hand and he had never felt as petrified as he was feeling now. Somehow it was different when he was here awaiting a professor's punishment than standing here all alone waiting for a parent's punishment. It was a new feeling for him and he had no idea how to handle it all. Looking around the room he could see a hot cup of tea and scrolls upon scrolls of parchment on the professor's desk. It seemed that the man had just recently vacated the dark office and Haeden hoped that the man would take his time coming back.

Taking a few glances back on the closed door, Haeden walked around the office looking for something to get his mind off the impending discussion. He knew he shouldn't be shocked at finding that most of the furniture in the medium sized office was black, but he was. Vials of potion ingredients were arranged neatly on sturdy shelves just behind the professor's desk while the remaining walls were lined with bookshelves. Haeden made his way to the closes one and found to no surprise a large Potions tome. However higher up the shelves Haeden could make out a few books with unrecognisable runes inscribed on their spines, one of which seemed to be inscribed using blood as it was glistening out at him. He fought the urge to pull the book down from its place and proceeded to look around before his professor returned.

He found a few trinkets that were essential to any wizarding domain lying around the Potion Master's office, like an enchanted clock that seem to be tuned to Dumbledore's location. Right now it pointed to 'Headmaster's Bedroom' for which he was immensely glad for. Towards a hidden corner of the room he spied a floor length mirror that looked to be a cross between a foe glass and the Mirror of Erised. Finally he'd reached the professor's immense desk and could see that the tea had barely been drunk and the parchments that littered the wooden desk all had a heavy dose of the professor's spidery scrawl in red ink.

However the one thing that caught his attention out of all the things in the Potion Master's office was the simple frame on the desk that was conveniently positioned so that it could only be seen if you were sitting behind the desk, right exactly where Haeden was standing. At first he could not recognise who were in the picture but then after awhile it dawned on him and he nearly dropped the frame as wave of realization struck him.

The picture held three people waving and smiling out into the world beyond their frame. A woman with flaming red hair he knew to be his mother Lily was holding a gibbering baby with silky black hair and piercing dark green eyes. But it was the man his infant self was reaching out to that caught his attention. Gone was the sickly pallor and gaunt look on his professor's face and instead a look of complete happiness could be seen radiating off of Snape's dark eyes as he gazed lovingly at his small family, his lips pulling into a small smile whenever his infant self giggled at having caught his father's finger.

Haeden felt hot tears building up in his eyes as he stared at what was undeniably a snapshot of a time in his forgotten past when Dumbledore's hand had yet to make a destructive smear in their lives.

"That was taken a few weeks before our lives turned upside down."

Haeden turned swiftly to come face to face with the older, wearier version of the happy man in the picture.

"You were such an unexpected surprise to your mother and I." continued Severus, staring at the picture that was held in his son's hand, a faint smile on his face. "We were already deeply involved in

the war against Dumbledore, I playing spy for both sides while Dumbledore had your mother trapped in a forced union with Potter to keep my obedience. Yet when we found out Lily was with child, our child, never for a second did we think you were unwelcomed. Unexpected, yes, but never did we want to give you up. You were our hope to end the war, it gave us renewed hope to end the war as soon as possible so that you could grow up in a world where a man like Dumbledore did not exist."

Then Severus looked up to meet his son's tear-filled eyes and pried the frame off of his hands. "But I guess you know very well it didn't go as we'd planned and for that I hope you would give your mother and I another chance to make things right again."

Staring down at his now empty hands Haeden didn't know how to act. Here in front of him was evidence that he'd always been loved by his parents and he could no longer push aside his longing for them. He'd come into this office angry with the world and wanting to unleash all of it to those who'd wronged him but now he felt utterly lost.

"Please tell me what happened after that night." asked Haeden, surprising not only him but Severus as well.

"Haeden, I don't think you need to know." said Severus, turning away from his son.

"I do!" replied Haeden firmly. "I hate not knowing. Selene goes on and on about the things you've done to keep me alive but she never tells me anything. I want to understand professor, I need to know. Please."

Severus looked back at his son to find him staring expectantly at him. There was such deep longing in those green eyes that Severus felt compelled to do anything the boy asked of him. Grabbing a bottle of his strongest liquor from the cabinet to buy more himself time, Severus poured himself a glass and with a wave of his hand lit a fire in the fireplace. "I rushed to Godric's Hollow the moment your mother signalled to us that Dumbledore had finally decided to go after you. He thought that you were the sire of Potter and your mother, a Halfling that he could easily put under his control and be loyal to him. But I was too late, Dumbledore had already taken you and left your mother half dead, having used the last of her powers in

enacting an ancient ritual that would hide your identity and keep you from falling under his complete control. I managed to save your mother's life but as you saw she's not what she used to be. She sacrificed all of her Magyck to keep Dumbledore from finding out that you were our son, a Clandestine and not a Halfling to do his bidding and not even I could restore her to full power."

Haeden listened intently as his professor's voice shook more and more with every word he said, the regret and pain evident on the stiff back that was presented before him. "I keep telling myself that perhaps if I'd arrived earlier I could have saved you and your mother a whole lot of pain. Then the next day I was summoned by Dumbledore and he told me that he'd taken you and had you watched constantly and if I ever tried to save you then he would have you killed. He of course thought I obeyed him because you were Lily's child. I had never felt so helpless and my hatred for Dumbledore reached its pinnacle. Every time I'm in his company I think nothing but sinking my fangs into his neck and he knows of this but knows that I won't because of what he has hanging over me."

"He'd tortured and left my wife half dead and now he was threatening to kill my own son if I even thought at looking at you the wrong way. I had no choice but to hope that Dumbledore would remain interested in you and in turn would keep you alive until such time came for us to be able to save you from his control." By now Severus had turned around to face his son, his face taut with emotion. "After that I put all of my energy in helping your mother get better. It was not an easy task. Dumbledore had me at his beck and call and I could not get away for long periods of time to care for her. And then the time came for you to come to Hogwarts and I was torn at how I should treat you. In one hand your mother and I wanted nothing more than to have you back safe and sound in our care but on the other hand Dumbledore was still too strong and his hold on you had yet to waver over the years. And so I decided to distance myself from you for your safety."

Haeden felt the walls he had built around himself collapsing and then Severus was in front of him, his dark eyes trying desperately to reach out to his torture soul. "Believe me child that every single bad thing I had to say to you caused me more pain that you could ever hope for. There were so many times in the years you were here that I wanted to hug you whenever you were hurt or warm your behind

whenever you did something so dangerous. But I couldn't and as a parent I felt helpless, unable to care for my own child."

After awhile Severus returned to staring at the flames and took a drink from his glass, unable to look at his son's face. That was the first time he'd bared all of his feelings to anyone other than his wife and he felt raw. And then he heard his son speak.

"Thank you." Haeden said softly, causing Severus to face him once more. "I know how hard it was for you to tell me and I appreciate you being honest with me."

Severus' heart rose at those words and tossed the rest of his drink into the flames before walking up towards his son. "Son, I know exactly how you feel; the fear, hate, anger and most of all the helplessness. I really do and if you would just give us the chance to make up for it I swear to you that you will never fall under his control again. Never again, do you hear me? Never again Haeden."

"I believe you." Haeden said quietly, almost to himself but Severus heard it nonetheless and Haeden felt a father's embrace for the first time.

Severus felt his son stiffen at his embrace but did not relent his hold. He didn't know until when his son would allow such contact again and he was determined to make his son feel that he was now safe and loved in the short intimate contact they had. And just as he had thought Haeden soon began to struggle against his hold and Severus had no choice but to release his hold.

"I-I-I'm willing to give this a try, sir but I believe I've messed up badly tonight." said Haeden, unwilling to meet his professor's eyes.

"Ah, yes." intoned Severus, feeling a bit of the weight lifted off of his shoulder. They still had a long way to go in terms of a good father and son relationship but at least now he'd made it through the front door and that was good enough for him, for now. "Selene was rather enraged when she relayed to me what you did to your friends."

"I don't think 'friends' is a term I would use to describe them now, sir." replied Haeden bitterly.

"Nevertheless Haeden, you should have not used the Hand like that. I allowed you to keep the Hand thinking that you were responsible enough not to use it in the open, but you still did." admonished Severus.

"But I thought you understood what I felt?" rebutted Haeden, staring fiercely at the elder Vampyre.

"I do child, I said I do and I never lie." said Severus.

"Then you should know why I did what I did!" exclaimed Haeden.

"I do and that is why I am reprimanding you now! I know how consuming anger is Haeden, didn't I just tell you how dearly I want Dumbledore dead? But do you see me destroying our cover in the open just so that I could release my anger?" expressed Severus.

Haeden stared defiantly at his professor before putting his head down in defeat. "No sir, you don't."

"Exactly!" cried Severus, making his way towards his desk. "And that's because I know full well what he is capable of when he finds out about your true identity and so do you! I am telling you now so you won't have to find out later on that he has an army called the Trackers. It is their job to hunt us down and capture us and if he ever finds out that we've found a way to free you from his control, he would send out all of his men after our people and worse of all he would place us all under his complete control. The only way we can take Dumbledore down is by stripping him of the Magyck he's acquired. Am I making myself clear, child?"

"Yes, sir." nodded Haeden.

"Good." replied Severus, leaning against his desk. "I know it's hard to put up with all of them, but you have to, we have to until we find where Dumbledore gets his Magyck. We have to play his game before we can win. I know as a Sedaire the Council depends on you to end all of this or suffer the consequences but do know that we are all here to end this and you never have to do anything alone, do you understand?"

The lump in Haeden's throat had unfortunately returned and all he could do was nod.

"And now for your punishment." stated Severus, causing Haeden to look up in surprise.

"What punishment?" he cried out incredulously.

"For putting yourself and all of us in danger of course." said Severus. "You agreed to give us a chance to be your parents and it's within my right as your father to punish you for putting yourself in danger like that. So I expect you to report here in my office after dinner for a week for your punishment and you are to hand over the Hand to me, I will return it to you once I deem you responsible enough to keep such an artefact."

"That's not fair!" exclaimed Haeden before he could stop himself.

Severus raised his brow at his son and said, "Not fair? There are many things in our lives that are extremely unfair and I am certain that this is not one of it. Despite how you feel towards us we still expect you to listen to what we tell you to and do what is right, but you didn't and you allowed your anger and frustrations to dictate your actions and it is only just that you get punished for it."

Haeden knew that what his professor said made sense but he was so new to this having a parent thing and the first parental thing his professor does is to punish him, he of course had no idea how to react but voice out his disapproval.

"Whether you find it fair or not, I expect to find you in this office tomorrow evening and if you do not appear, I will make sure to tan your behind."

Haeden's eyes widened at the threat. "You wouldn't!"

"Try me son." said Severus, daring his son to speak out again. Haeden didn't know if the man would really push through with spanking his sixteen year old self and he had no desire of finding out and therefore subjected himself to having detention for a week. Immediately after he'd agreed to the detention, the heavy dungeon doors opened and Haeden was made aware once more that they were in a room lit only a fire and as soon as the lights from the corridor flooded the room, Haeden found himself temporarily disoriented.

"Looks like things went well." commented Selene as she stared around the room. "And no broken furniture too. Amazing!"

Haeden frowned at the last comment and turned to ask his professor. "It seems that my escort has arrived, may I be excused now, sir?"

"Very well, I'm expecting you to be on time tomorrow and until your detention ends." said Severus, gesturing for his children to get out of his office. "Good night!"

"Good night professor!" Selene called out, holding the door open for Haeden.

Once the two Vampyres were out in the corner, Haeden turned to look at his sister and said, "I do not want to hear anything that you've got to say until tomorrow. Got it?"

"Fair enough." acquiesced Selene and the two of them made their quick and silent trek back to the Gryffindor Tower.

When Haeden returned to his dormitory he found no trace of what had transpired earlier that night and that somehow they had managed to put both Granger and Weasley back to normal. That night Haeden went to bed feeling lighter than he had ever been in months.

A/N: read and review.

'til next post

dan4eva



## The Adopted One

The morning dawned bright over the mountains that surrounded their ancestral home, a land that sits on a plane of its own. Once upon a time it had been the home of the most influential Warlock family in all of the Clandestine Plane. But after the downfall of one of its scion, the entire land had been banished away, never to be a part of any planes until the family redeems itself to eyes of the Council, and right now the last chance they had of redeeming themselves and finally get back home lies on the shoulders of her only son. Being isolated in a world between two worlds takes a lot out of a person and if it were not for the fact that the Queen would pass through the Gates just to keep her company, she would have gone mad years ago for living in the stone manor all alone for the majority of the year. For this particular day, she had been up before the crack of dawn to tend to her blooming plants. In the years of her son's absence, it kept her calm and sane to be able to cater to her plants and watch them blossom when she could not do so for her son. It made her feel less of a horrible mother for leaving her son but now that her son had returned to them, gardening had become more of a way to keep herself occupied than a penance for her actions. Now she could truly enjoy and see the beauty of the flowers and plants she had planted out longing for her son.

"You're Magnolias are growing well, my child."

Lily wiped her hands clean on her overalls and turned to face the newcomer. "Cassiopeia, I'm so glad that you could make it today. Sev and I were rather worried when you failed to drop by last week."

"I'm very sorry about that dear, our people have recently suffered a huge blow and I had to reassure them that we are doing all we can to find William." said the Queen, reaching out to help her daughter-in-law get back on her feet.

"Yes, I did hear about the Head of the Perseus clan going missing. Tell me, have you made any headway as to where he could be?" asked Lily, retrieving her cane from the nearby rock she'd placed it on.

"None what so ever." replied the Queen, dejected. "And I fear a riot would soon ensue if we can't even keep the clan heads safe from Dumbledore's reach."

For a woman walking with the aid of a cane, Lily walked, albeit slower, with the same regal grace that the Queen was exhibiting. The two walked around the perimeter of her garden, enjoying the delights of the morning air and regaling each other of tales that had nothing to do with the war that has turned all their lives on its head before heading back inside the manor for a cup of tea.

"Tell me dear, how's it going with my grandson?" asked the Queen, fixing tea for the both of them.

"It's been slow." confessed Lily, taking the proffered tea from the Vampyre Queen. "But Sev contacted me last night telling me that Haeden's finally allowed us a second chance. Cassiopeia I wouldn't have known what to do if my son continued to hate my guts."

"Oh child," cried the Queen, reaching out to comfort her daughter-in-law. "Your son is blessed with both yours and my Severus' strong mind, of course it will take time but I know in my heart that he longs for the two of you too, if not more than how much you long for him. If as you say that he has agreed to open himself to the two of you, then it won't be long now before we are all family once more. You just have to stay strong Lily."

"I know. I know." said Lily, getting up on her feet and ambling towards the window. "Just that some days I find it difficult to stay strong."

"I know what you mean, dear." replied the Queen, placing her cup back on the tray and following her daughter-in-law by the bay window. "But you are one of the strongest women I know. You have survived time and time again and I am certain you will survive this hurdle as well. You were not made a Sedaire for nothing child, and though you have lost a lot in the process, you more than made up for it for going on with your life despite it all. Keep strong Lily, the end is near, I have Seen it."

Lily turned to look at the youthful visage of the age-old queen and said, "I hope so too," before facing the large stretch of white and blue above them. It was a very beautiful morning.

For the remainder of the day the two women talked of nothing more pertaining to the war. It was an unspoken rule between them that

discussion of war was limited only at the beginning of the visit for a day between mothers and daughters should not be tainted with the tragedies of war. According to them, that as first hand victims of the old man's cruelty that they deserved a day when they could momentarily forget the travesties of those around them. It was a means to stay sane in a world in a world filled with madness.

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The reflection that stared before him every morning was calming at times but more often than not, he hated looking at the face of the man that had a hand in ruining his farce of a life. Whether he wanted to admit it or not, last night had been a big wake up call for him and for the first time he wanted to lay eyes on the face of Haeden Ares Snape, the face of that little boy who wanted nothing more to grab his father's long fingers. He traced the edge of his jaw with his finger and it felt so wrong not to be able to discern the strong jaw line he remembered seeing in the summer and the sharp aristocratic features that made Harry Potter's face look like a weak and meek little boy.

Staring at the mask he had to don for the unforeseeable future, Haeden took the face towel that hung beside the mirror and wiped his face clean. He was the first to rise that morning and immediately took advantage of the still empty lavatories before later risers like Weasley rushed in to be at least presentable for their first period of the day. By the time he'd completed his morning ablutions and dressed for the day, his roommates were only beginning to stir and he quickly grabbed his book bag from his trunk and headed out before they could notice him.

Considering it was still rather early in the morning he hoped to get some alone time in the Great Hall since there were very few early risers in the castle and indeed when he got there, there were only a handful of students present either having their meals or studying, most of which were Ravenclaws. However Haeden found that he was not the first Gryffindor to rise early that day and proceeded to sit across the only other Gryffindor in the Great Hall.

"Ginny," greeted Haeden flatly, staring the witch in the eye, his voice dripping with accusation.

"Harry," replied Ginny, levelling Haeden's intense gaze, though her voice was calm and understanding.

"Since when?" Haeden demanded under his breath.

"First year," replied Ginny, casually going about her breakfast as if she was not being interrogated by a pissed off Vampyre.

Haeden spluttered on his pumpkin juice and cried out, "What?"

Ginny glared at Haeden and looked around, glad that the Vampyre's exclamation had not attracted the attention of those in the Great Hall. "You heard me!" she hissed lowly under her breath. "And this is not a conversation that should be held in the Great Hall."

Haeden around the Great Hall and though no one was paying them any attention, students were slowly piling into the Hall and they would soon be surrounded by pesky eavesdroppers. "Meet me by the lake after the morning classes and then you will tell me everything." whispered Haeden so that only she could hear.

Ginny gave a diminutive nod and Haeden relaxed his stance but then his ears picked up the sounds of his year mates approaching the Great Hall. Haeden turned to looked towards Ginny and she mouthed, "Go!"

Haeden was not ready to face Granger and Weasley after last night's events and did not need to be told twice to leave. He grabbed two strips of bacon from the pile on the table and dashed out of the Great Hall just as the fifth year Gryffindors came around the corner. After escaping the company of his fellow Gryffindors, Haeden spent whatever was left of breakfast waiting outside the Defence classroom and was inevitably the first to enter five minutes before the bell was suppose to ring.

Monroe was yet to be in the classroom when the doors opened and Haeden made a beeline for his seat at the back of the room and waited patiently for the class to begin. He'd barely been waiting for a few minutes when a deep voice caught him completely by surprise, causing him to jump slightly out of his seat.

"Mr Potter, just the person I was looking for!"

Haeden spun around from his seat and found their Defence professor walking towards him. "Professor!" he intoned in surprise, internally wondering why he wasn't able to hear the man coming beforehand.

"Mr. Potter I have just come into a package of rare Defence text that I would love to share with you," said Monroe excitedly.

"With me sir?" asked Haeden, curious. "Why?"

"Well," began Monroe, crossing his arms before his chest and leaning against the desk. "According to all of your previous DADA professors' charts, you are the best Defence student here and I thought you would appreciate my offer very much. Most of the books I've managed to pry off private collections are first edition copies and were written during the Founders' time."

Haeden stared widely at his professor, unable to believe that he was being given a chance to browse ancient Defence text and best of all, it was offered to him, and not the resident know-it-all. "I'm honoured sir!" he said, genuinely so.

"So are you up for it?" said Monroe, raising his brows gamely. "I might even teach a spell or two. But of course this is only between the two of us."

"I understand sir," said Haeden.

"Good!" cried Monroe, clapping his hands. "I'll send you an owl to tell you when you can come to my office."

With the prospect of learning ancient spells, Haeden felt his early dreary mood vanish to be replaced by eager anticipation. That is however until, out of the blue, Monroe blurted out. "You know, I could never really see it in the papers, but now that I've gotten to have a good look at you, you look exactly like James Potter, except for your eyes."

Haeden looked down as he felt the man's eyes on him and frowned at the statement. Wasn't it just this morning that he looked at the mirror and hated what he saw? However for the sake of charade he looked up curiously and asked through gritted teeth, "Did you know my father, sir?"

Monroe stood up straight and puffed out at the question. "Why of course! James and I were rather close during Auror training. I tell you your father was the best duellist I've ever had the chance of duelling against. That man has reflexes that you would never believe!"

"Really?" said Haeden in interest.

"Why yes, Harry! Great man James was. It was a sad day for our word when he died." uttered Monroe quiet passionately.

"It's such a shame I never got to know him." said Haeden in a voice he hoped conveyed both longing and sadness.

In a surprise move from the man, Monroe cut down the space between them and gave his shoulder a firm squeeze. "I'm sure wherever your father is, he is proud of you and all of your accomplishments."

"I sure hope so," replied Haeden quietly.

Fortunately the awkward moment was interrupted by the arriving of his missing classmates and Monroe quickly removed his hands off of his shoulders and took his place behind the professor's desk. But before he could ponder further on his professor's gesture, he sensed the approach of his once-friends and prepared himself for the coming confrontation.

"You weren't at breakfast." Hermione stated in a disapproving manner.

Haeden watched Granger's face anxiously for any signs of last night's estrangement but it seemed that whatever Selene had asked Ginny to do had done the job. He then turned to his other side and saw not a scratch on Weasley's otherwise freckled face. However he had to ask to make sure.

"Do you remember what happened last night?" he asked tentatively.

"Last night?" repeated Ron in confusion. "Why what happened last night? I knew I should have gone back to the common room than accompany 'Mione in the library the whole night."

"If I recall properly, you were pretty content at keeping me company in the library last night!" retorted the bushy-haired witch snappishly causing Weasley's face to turn as red as his hair.

Haeden mentally cringed at the image of the two beside him making out in the library and that drove the wedge between the three of them further as Granger and Weasley failed to tell him of their relationship, for it was so damn obvious that there was something going on between the resident bookworm and the youngest Weasley boy.

"Well," Haeden started, coming up with a lie that would fit into his sudden question and hoping to disperse the tension he had unwittingly put himself in between of. "I woke up rather disoriented today and couldn't for the life of me remember what I did last the night before. And instead of trying to go back to sleep, I decided to just have an early breakfast."

"But why didn't you go see Madam Pomfrey?" demanded Granger, worry and panic colouring her brown eyes.

"Why would I go see Madam Pomfrey?" asked Haeden, brows furrowed at the girl's reaction. But before the witch could reply, Monroe had called the class attention and all discussion ceased though not before Haeden caught the exchange of looks that went between Weasley and Granger. For the length of the period, Monroe stressed the importance of control in the execution of the more powerful spells and quizzed them all on their knowledge of the many curses and counter-curses. Whether it was by intention or not, Haeden pretty much didn't care, Monroe kept calling him out to answer his question, completely ignoring a put-out Granger.

By the end of the class, the good mood he'd acquired however was not enough for him to tolerate a ranting Granger who was utterly vexed that a professor had ignored her. Haeden also wasn't oblivious to the dirty looks she was throwing him and if he could only get away with it, he would have slapped her to kingdom come, the obnoxious bint! But for the sake of the promise he'd made to Snape last night, shocking as that was, he played ignorant to it all and plastered a ridiculously happy face as he and Weasley escorted her to her next class and then proceeded to have a game of chess in the common for their free period.

Haeden found it extremely frustrating that with all the new great abilities he'd regained after rediscovering who he truly was, he was still horrible in the simple game of chess. He had to go through three crashing losses and talked himself away from having to endure a fourth, saying to Weasley that he had to go researching something in the library. Checking his watch to make sure he had ample time before the afternoon bell rang, Haeden made his way down the Grand Staircase and out to the lake. He chose the most secluded spot he could find, a huge rock that could hide three people comfortably, and waited for Ginny to arrive.

As soon as he heard the bell ring in the distance, he didn't wait long for Ginny to appear and grace him with her presence. He didn't know whether it was due to the fact that he now knew she was somehow a Clandestine or he had just been blind to it before now, but he could clearly sense her Magyck now and he could tell that she was quite powerful.

"Hello Harry," uttered Ginny, sitting beside him on the ground, their backs against the smooth surface of the rock.

Haeden watched her, scrutinizing every inch of her and trying to find any more signs to he'd missed that would have told him earlier of her Clandestine nature. The Ginny Weasley he remembered was small and timid, never daring to meet him straight in the eyes and blushed horrible at the sight of him. However as he was looking at her now, really looking at her, he realized that the Ginny imbedded in his head was that of a Ginny he'd met in his second year and six years had passed since then. Ginny had now blossomed into a young lady and somewhere between all of that, regained Clandestine abilities that have been stripped from her ancestors.

"Done yet, Mr Potter?" intoned Ginny, an amused smirk on her face.

Haeden blushed slightly at having been caught staring and cleared his throat before looking up at her with a serious look on his face. "Why didn't you tell me?"

Ginny caught the tone of his voice and said, "You know why Harry. It's extremely dangerous for us to be revealing ourselves."



"Even to be me, your friend?" Haeden couldn't help but shout at the girl.

"Most especially you!" exclaimed Ginny but regretted it immediately as soon as she saw the hurt in Haeden's face. "Harry what I meant was that for years you were controlled by the Headmaster and none of us, not even your parents could approach you without him finding out about us. I know you know the dangers Harry, please try to understand."

"Is that why I'm only sensing you now?" asked Haeden brusquely.

"Yes." said Ginny. "There was no use cloaking my aura from you anymore once you found out about me. I didn't like keeping things from you Harry, especially when I found out that you were different like me."

Haeden deeply wanted to remain angry with the youngest Weasley child but the sincerity he could feel in her voice was too much for him to be able to maintain his rage for long – sometimes Vampiric sense was just not what you need when you want to block out all emotion. "Fine, I understand. But what I don't is how you managed to become a Clandestine when I know for a fact that your family is deep inside Dumbledore's pocket."

Ginny looked uneasy at the question and Haeden was afraid that she would not answer and he would be forced to pry it off of her. But then she stood from where they were both hidden from view and walked towards the lake. "When it happened I was both thrilled and petrified."

"You said earlier it happened during your first year. But all I recall is... well you know it better I do." said Haeden, unsure on how to approach the topic.

Ginny nodded her head. "Yes. I was eleven when it happened. It was more of an accident than anything else. As you know Tom possessed me, asked me to open the chamber and then you came and rescued me from him. After that incident I kept mostly to myself, I was too young then and I'd felt violated. My mother kept behaving weirdly around me, treating me as if I was made of glass and it was slowly suffocating me. None of them understood me, they keep insisting that I was still me and that nothing had changed." She then

turned from the lake to look at him, her face hardened by suppressed emotions. "But Harry, everything changed. I'd poured all of me to Tom and destroying that diary could not bring back my innocence. I was already a different girl even before you came to find me in the Chamber."

"What do you mean Ginny?" asked Haeden, fearing the things he would hear.

"There's a reason why possession is considered dangerous. It requires strength of both the body and the mind and unfortunately Tom had neither of those things at that time. When he possessed me, a part of Tom stayed within me and the longer I was taken under his will, more of him remained inside of me until such time came when you destroyed the link between the two of us, more than half of me was Tom." said Ginny.

Haeden could not believe what he was hearing, but before he would speak a word in edgewise, Ginny had ploughed on, seemingly wanting to get on with her story as quickly as possible. "It wasn't hard to figure out that half of me was Tom since I was viewing memories that were not mine, events that had happened prior to my own birth. At first the memories would flash at odd moments, leaving me disoriented. But halfway through the year I'd learned to control them and I was soon viewing Tom's life and everything I thought I knew about him changed."

"Like what? That he felt guilty for all the killings he's done?" spat Haeden, unable to help himself. "He might have been young then but he was no less cruel than he is now."

Ginny smiled at his reaction and said. "I knew you would say that and I felt the same as you do now but then I researched that whatever is transferred during a possession cannot be altered. That's why it is so dangerous, you could leave a huge part of yourself in another person and there is nothing you can do about it and so I started to believe what I was seeing. And before long I began to understand the circumstances that led him to do everything that he's done."

"Are you trying to justify to me the evils he's done?" said Haeden incredulously.

"I didn't say that." said Ginny with a frown. "I said I began to understand, which then makes it easier for me, at least now I know why he did what he did."

"And why did he do all that he did?" cried Haeden in a patronizing voice. "Tell me Ginny, what reason could there have been for him to kill innocent lives?"

"You know, for all the fervour you have at hating him, you and him are not at all dissimilar." said Ginny.

"Don't you dare compare me to that madman!"

Ginny ignored his indignant cries, merely smiling in a way that told Haeden that she knew more than him and it unsettled him. "You very well know that the Headmaster is far from the holier-than-thou leader he wants the public to know him as, so why can't the same be applied to the Dark Lord?"

Haeden found himself speechless at that, he'd never thought of it that way. True he knew that it was Dumbledore and not Voldemort that had come to the nursery that faithful night, could it be possible that all he knew of Voldemort had been fabricated as well? However despite that fact Voldemort was still an evil Dark Lord that over the years had performed heinous acts to the wizarding public.

And then the little facts he'd found out about Voldemort hit him. According to Selene he was related to Voldemort which meant that Voldemort was a Clandestine as well, and if that were true then all that he'd done couldn't have been an act of selfish cruelty, couldn't it? Not if he was a Clandestine fighting for his people, and he was certain that Selene had mentioned that Voldemort had been a Sedaire too once upon a time.

Ginny watched as the cogs turned in the young Vampyre's mind. She knew that one of the ways the Headmaster controlled Haeden was by telling him lies and fabricating past events so that he would perpetually look good in the eyes of the then impressionable youth. Slowly but surely they had peeled away all the layers of lies, to the wild indignation of the said young man, but this one truth about the Dark Lord would not be easy to digest.

"Where was I?" Ginny began again. "Ah yes, I'd began to understand him once I'd learnt to control his memories and began viewing them in more or less a chronological order. I saw his youth and how he had to grow up unloved in an orphanage. I saw how Dumbledore made an impression on him when he was an eleven year old boy. I saw his anguish at finding out his mother's hidden heritage and I saw his anger when he realized that the Headmaster wanted nothing more than use him and his powers to enslave his mother's people. Doesn't that sound familiar?"

Haeden turned away from the pointed look Ginny was sending him and he heard her sigh heavily before continuing. "I am not asking you to forgive or even like the Dark Lord, Harry, I am merely giving you the explanation you wanted from me. It may not be what you wanted to hear but it's the truth."

Ginny saw his rigid back sag a little and she knew she was getting through to him. "By the time I'd gained complete control over the Dark Lord's memories I thought that that was the bulk of the things he'd unwittingly transferred to me but then powers I never had began to manifest. I began to be more sensitive to my surroundings and the magic around me. But when by accident I'd managed to control my mother as if I'd cast an Imperious on her to during one of times she was trying to get me to open up to her that I realized that I needed help in controlling these abilities. I had no more knowledge of my new abilities other than the memories of Tom and so I sought after the only man in his memories that I knew he trusted and luckily for me, the most accessible of all the Clandestines. Before Christmas of my second year I sought out your father."

"But then I had no idea he was your father for I had not yet reached that point of time in Tom's memories. And so I told him everything that went on between the Dark Lord and me. At first he didn't believe me since it was unheard of for the Magyck the Council stripped from every witch and wizard to suddenly manifest in a single witch centuries later. But then I told him that I, unlike my ancestors and majority of the present wizarding world, did not fear Magyck and that I hated what the Headmaster was doing under all of his godly acts of kindness. From the moment I wrote in that diary I was already a different person, I was no longer Ginny Weasley, the pride of the Weasley family, another dutiful pawn in the Headmaster's scheme. My eyes had been opened to the lies of the wizarding world and the dirt in their past. Magyck, I told your father was something to respect

and not hate for favouring certain creatures. It's an untameable entity that by chance could be wielded much easier by some, thus is the nature of Magyck; you can't steal it or demand it just because you think you are worthy. Being a Vampyre he of course knew I was telling the truth and from then on he helped train me."

"Professor Snape told me all of the pros and cons of wielding Magyck but instead of fearing it and wanting to put it under my complete command so that it would do all that I want, I began to love it even more. It was wild and untameable than you first have to learn to fear but once you've done that, respect for it comes and then it protects you like nothing else." said Ginny softly, eyes closed as if she was imagining her Magyck wrapping itself around her. "But even as the professor trained me to control my abilities, I still felt incomplete. I wanted to be recognized by the Council as a true Clandestine. I no longer wanted to be considered a witch whose ancestors ruined the lives of thousands; I wanted to embrace a right that was stripped from me by the foolishness of those before me. But not even that desire for acceptance was enough for me. I wanted my Tom back."

Haeden's head snapped back to face the red haired girl at that, he just could not believe his ears. "Your Tom?"

Ginny's eyes widened at the insinuation and shook her head laughing before correcting the misunderstanding. "Not in that way Harry. Having learnt everything I did about the Dark Lord, the hatred my parents wanted me to have against all things Dark began to fade and I began to see him in a different life. Perhaps you could say it's the part of Tom that is still in me that is making me think like this, but part of me is still me and that part of me longs for Tom too."

"Ginny I'm not getting you." said Haeden softly.

"You see Harry, Tom never really harmed me. He possessed me, yes, but other than losing my innocence at a much younger age, what further harm did he do to? I was bound to lose it anyway. He was kind Harry, when he possessed me never did he force me to do anything; it was all me, merely listening to what he wanted me to do. He answered all of the questions my parents refused to answer and he truly was my first friend. He showed me that I didn't have to imprison myself to what my family wanted me to become, that I could be my own person if I worked hard on what I believed in. To

be honest I hated you at first when you freed me of him because I was devastated that I'd loss my friend and confidant. But when I got back to the Burrow, I realized that I still had a bit of Tom in me and that's when my hate for you vanished and I focused all of my energy into knowing more about him."

"In the summer before my third year I found out all about you and what the Headmaster had done. I wanted to approach you so badly because then I wouldn't be alone in all of this, that I would have someone my age to talk to about everything that I'd learnt. But the professor forbid me to express even the slightest idea that I knew something about Clandestines to you, citing that the Headmaster would know and that I would be in grave danger. Then just before term began I met your mother and sister and I slowly began to understand just how big of a threat the Headmaster really is to the Clandestines and just how much danger we would all be in if he found out that we were all planning to take you away from him."

"Once I'd learnt everything I could from your mother and sister we began to device a plan to resurrect the Dark Lord, for truly he was the only one left beside you who had a chance of bringing the Headmaster down. And contrary to what happened in the graveyard during your Final Task, I was the key element, and not you, that brought the Dark Lord back." said Ginny proudly.

"What are you talking about Ginny? I felt it when Pettigrew cut my arm and used my blood to resurrect Voldemort and I never saw you there." cried Haeden.

"You see you had to believe that you were the one that brought back the Dark Lord so that Dumbledore would believe it. The Headmaster went to a lot of trouble to it seem to you that the Dark Lord was your enemy, but he went to even greater lengths to make it seem to the Dark Lord that you were the one that had defeated him. So if the time ever came for the two of you to fight, you would destroy the only Sedaire that he failed to get his hands on, that way no one would have a chance at stopping him anymore. He thinks your mother to be dead and now that he has in his control the last of the Grindenwald line under his complete control, the only one that stands in his way was the one that got away."

"It took awhile for your parents to prove their loyalty to the Dark Lord had never wavered and for them to remove whatever enchantment

the Headmaster placed on the Dark Lord before he was vanquished to make him believe that he was betrayed. But once that was done we orchestrated an elaborate ritual to make it seem that the Dark Lord had to dig into the depths of Magyck to revive himself using your blood when in reality he'd already been revived by my blood months before. The unexpected connection that we had made it much easier to revive the Dark Lord and imagine my joy when the first thing he asked for was where his Airu was." said Ginny, a bright smile on her face.

"Airu?" questioned Haeden, surprised that the Rumnic had rolled off his tongue easily.

"It means 'the adopted one'," explained Ginny happily. "Long before the Dark Lord was even resurrected, I'd already thought of him as more of a father figure to me than Arthur Weasley had ever been. He was the one to open my eyes to the world but most of all he understood me better than anyone else; I can't even say that much about my family. And to know that he considers me as his daughter made all the decisions I'd made worthwhile. "

"So you're telling me that you're the adopted daughter of Voldemort?" intoned Haeden darkly, "What does that make you then, the Dark Heir? Poised to take over once he's dead?"

Ginny glared at Haeden's tone of voice and said in a crisp, cold voice Haeden had never heard of before. "No. I am the Airu, the adopted one and I am not considered as one of you. I may have gotten some of Tom's Magyck through some weird twist of events but for the Council that is not enough to accept me. And until Dumbledore is defeated, my pleas for acceptance is the least of their concerns!"

There were many times, when he and Ron were still friends, that the red-headed boy had told him that an angry Ginny was a sight to behold, and he could now see why. It was nearing winter and the air was dry but despite that, some force of nature was blowing the young woman's red hair into a frenzy. Her once warm chocolate brown eyes were ablaze with such fire that Haeden felt if he stared long enough he would burn in their intensity. And throughout all of this he could feel her trying her best to prevent her Magyck from lashing out at him. He then wondered what would become of him if she had not been quick to reign in her power because right now

even without that factor, he was scared and at the same time worried for her.

But before he could even reach out to calm the redheaded temptress, the unnatural wind had dissipated and Ginny eyes had toned down to their natural warmth. For a moment the girl look disoriented however upon seeing the look of worry tinged with fear on the young Vampyre's face, Ginny's frame sagged in exhaustion.

"Forgive me, Harry, that was completely uncalled for." she expressed, ashamed.

Still stunned from the short moment he'd seen his friend's anger unleashed, it took awhile for Haeden to comprehend that she was apologizing to him.

"What was that all about?" exclaimed Haeden, adrenalin slowly receding from his body.

Ginny walked back towards the boulder like rock and sat beside the young Vampyre, very much aware that her friend was currently wary of her. "I apologize for that outburst, Harry. The Council's indifference to my pleas just gets to me the most."

"Why do you want so much to be accepted by them?" Haeden couldn't help but ask.

"Because I have no where else to go!" exclaimed Ginny.

"You have your family, Gin." stated Haeden, but at the sharp look on the girl's face he knew he'd said the wrong thing.

"That's a load of crap Harry, and you know it!" snapped Ginny. "How can I ever go back to a family that listens more to the voice of barmy old man than to the voice of their own daughter? Plus I've never fitted in the Weasley family, before and after the events in the Chamber. I'm too different from them. They believe that if one is not in the side of the Light, then they are immediately Dark and evil. They're a bunch of simple-minded fools being led asunder by a wolf in sheep's clothing. Did you know that prior to this school year they ordered me to seduce you? What kind of parents would do that to their daughter? And then I found out it was all because of



Dumbledore! Would you still want to live in a family that is willing to sell out their daughter so as to get ahead and please their leader?"

'Ginny,' began Haeden only to be stopped by her sudden cutting look.

"Harry, I don't belong here. I don't think I was ever meant to live here. I want to be accepted in the Plane. I want to be acknowledged as the daughter of the Dark Lord. I want to go where I will not be different, where Magyck is diverse and all around. Did you even know that Vampyres and Lycans interact in a daily basis inside the Plane? Where can you find it here that a vampire will not tear a werewolf to shreds upon first whiff of their scent? I want that kind of world Harry; a peaceful world. But I am not allowed because I was born to a jealous race."

"I understand Ginny," said Haeden finally, pulling the girl into his arms and allowing her to cry onto his broad shoulders. Ginny cried until she was spent and Haeden hadn't the heart to argue with her anymore. He was far from sold on her explanation about Voldemort, perhaps he would ask Selene's opinion on the matter before he came to any decision but for now both him Ginny were emotionally spent.

They continued to sit on the ground wrapped in each other's arms, seeking for both comfort and acceptance, until the bell rang once more in the distance and Haeden heard Ginny giggling in his ear.

"We've missed lunch," said Ginny, pulling away from her friend's arm.

"I no longer care for what they serve in the castle," replied Haeden nonchalantly, shaking the tingling feeling of little pinpricks on his leg as he slowly stood from the ground.

"Oh!" cried Ginny, clapping her hand over her mouth. "I'd completely forgotten." She then proceeded to rummage her robe pockets. Haeden watched in interest as she fished out three vials of glistening red liquid from her robes and tossed them at him.

Haeden caught the vials with ease and stared at Ginny in confusion. "What are these for?"

"They're peace offerings from Selene. She told me to give them to you as an apology for treating the way she treated you last night." explained Ginny, smoothening out her robes as she prepared to make a reappearance in the castle.

Haeden could only stare at the three, blood filled vials in his hands before pocketing the two and downing the other one – he did miss lunch. "It's warm!" he said in surprise, looking at Ginny's bemused face. "Tell her apology accepted." He then crushed the empty glass vial into dust and scattered it around the place.

And then silence fell between them, both staring at each other and pondering of what to say next after an emotional outburst. When it seemed that Ginny would not be the one to say the next thing, Haeden felt compelled to at least express to the girl that she still had family left other than the Dark Lord.

"Ginny, for as much as it's worth, I truly do understand your plight. I will not lie to you and say that I agree with all that you've said about Voldemort, I will need more than your opinion for me to make a decision. But do know that even if you feel that the Weasleys are no longer your family and that Voldemort is all that you have left, I am still here. I may be Haeden Snape, but the aspects of Harry Potter that I know are real, like his ability to be compassionate, are still with me. I will always be here for you. If Voldemort is the father Arthur Weasley failed at, then I will be the brother that all six of your brothers failed at." And before Haeden could even prepare himself, he found his face once again filled with flaming red hair.

"Thank you, Haeden," Ginny whispered softly to his ears, using his real name for the first time.

"I've always thought of you as a sister, Gin." said Haeden, giving the young woman a tight hug before letting her go. "And now I have two, lucky me!"

Ginny gave him a playful smack in the head for his last comment moment and had to laugh how he was bent on remaining angry with the girl before this whole thing started, and now here he was, having just told the girl that he would be her brother. It was happening quiet often, Haeden noticed, that situations he'd had all planned out in his head don't always end up the way he wants them to. He didn't know whether to be glad or frustrated at these turn of events. One thing

was for sure though; he absolutely hated having these things sprung upon him and was now determined to ask as many questions as humanly possible to lessen them.

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It was way past office hours in the Ministry, but even so the halls beneath the Ministry were never thriving with people in any hour of day. However a man dressed in robes so red they looked black was marching through the dark halls, a freshly rolled parchment clutch tightly in his hands, and it was only the pureblood decorum that had been ingrained at him since infancy that prevented the man from running towards his destination. Finally after endless twist and turns he arrived in front of a door void of any handle and the man placed his right hand on a golden plaque right where the handle should have been. A brief flash of light later and the man withdrew his hand from the plaque and walked straight through the wooden door.

The room was circular and sparsely furnished by a desk, three chairs, a filing cabinet and an ornate coat stand, and illuminated by a stark light that seem to come from above. Behind the desk sat a portly man dressed in a similar fashion as his late night visitor, a solid letter U was stitched on the robe above both men's left breast.

"I gave great news, Alpha, sir!" stated the visitor.

The portly man perked up at once and asked, "What have you found, Boar?"

The man, Boar, eagerly cut the distance to the desk and handed the rolled up parchment to the man who was undoubtedly his boss. "The Tag Witches have located the barman in the village where Grindenwald was defeated."

The man called Alpha by those who worked in the bowels of the Ministry mumbled softly to himself, "Is that so?" before turning to ask Boar. "He is the only sane one left?"

"I wouldn't call him sane, Alpha." replied Boar. "Everyone in that damned village old enough to really know what happened or witnessed the duel is either dead or knocked incurably in the head. However according to Silva the barman was in his twenties when

the confrontation occurred and has somehow maintained basic mental faculties despite being caught in the wash of the spell."

"So he's the least insane we could find." concluded Alpha miserably.

"I'm afraid that is the case, sir." confirmed Boar. "But he is the best that we have."

Alpha then unfurled the parchment and surveyed the information they had on the barman. "It says here he's lived all alone in a town five miles away from Hogsmeade since Grindenwald's defeat." read Alpha, a frown forming on his lips.

"Yes sir,"

"Rather convenient don't you think?" said Alpha darkly, storing the parchment in the filing cabinet behind his desk. "That the only coherent survivor of that night is within Dumbledore's apparating range?"

Boar did not answer. He had notice that fact as well and was certain that this time the person they had would have the information they needed.

"But you are right Boar," said Alpha, his stout form leaning forwards on his desk. "As of now he is the only lead we've got and by the looks of things, he just might have all the information we are looking for."

"I will send a couple of Field Unspeakables tight away, sir!"

"No," said Alpha, shaking his head and walking away from his desk. "I will personally see to this barman. I have waited months for this and I will not have a rookie mess this up for me." Alpha transfigured his robes to something less conspicuous and pulled off a lime green bowler hat from the coat stand. Both men exited the circular room.

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'til next post

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CHP27